

Contents

1	Reich	1
1.1	Etymology	1
1.2	Usage throughout German history	2
1.2.1	Frankish Empire	2
1.2.2	Holy Roman Empire	2
1.2.3	German Reich	2
1.2.4	During the Weimar Republic	3
1.2.5	During the Nazi period	3
1.2.6	Possible negative connotations in modern use	3
1.2.7	Limited usage in the railway system of the German Democratic Republic	4
1.2.8	Names	4
1.3	Usage in related languages	4
1.3.1	Rike, rige, riik	4
1.3.2	Rijk/ryk	4
1.4	See also	4
1.5	References	5
2	German Reich	6
2.1	Term	6
2.2	The difference between “Reich” and “Empire”	6
2.2.1	End of World War II	7
2.2.2	Divided Germany	7
2.2.3	Reunified Germany	8
2.3	See also	8
2.4	References	8
2.5	External links	9
3	Volksdeutsche	10
3.1	Origin of the term	10
3.2	Historical background	11
3.2.1	Treaty of Versailles	11
3.3	The Nazi era before World War II	11
3.3.1	Pre-war relations with the Nazis	12

3.3.2	Internal propaganda	12
3.3.3	Collaboration with the Nazis	12
3.4	During World War II	13
3.4.1	Volksdeutsche in German-occupied western Poland	13
3.4.2	Volksdeutsche in the territories annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939–1940	15
3.4.3	After the German invasion of the USSR	16
3.4.4	Volksdeutsche in Hungary	16
3.4.5	Volksdeutsche in Romania	16
3.4.6	Volksdeutsche in Yugoslavia	16
3.5	Expulsion and exodus from Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the war	17
3.6	Legacy	17
3.7	See also	17
3.8	Notes	18
3.9	References	19
3.10	Bibliography	20
3.11	External links	20
4	Lebensraum	21
4.1	Origins	21
4.2	First World War nationalist premise	23
4.3	Interwar propaganda	24
4.3.1	Ideology of Adolf Hitler	25
4.4	Second World War (1939–45)	26
4.5	Historical retrospective	30
4.6	Contemporary definitions	31
4.7	See also	32
4.8	Footnotes	32
4.9	References	35
4.10	External links	35
4.11	Text and image sources, contributors, and licenses	36
4.11.1	Text	36
4.11.2	Images	37
4.11.3	Content license	40

Chapter 1

Reich

This article is about the German word **Reich**, and in particular its historical and political implications. For other uses, see **Reich** (disambiguation).

Reich (/ˈraɪk/^[1] German: [ˈʁaɪç]) is a German word literally meaning "realm". The terms *Kaiserreich* (literally "realm of an emperor") and *Königreich* (literally "realm of a king") are used in German to refer to empires and kingdoms respectively.

As such, the term *Deutsches Reich* (often translated to "German Empire") continued to be used even after the collapse of the German Empire and abolition of the monarchy in 1918, without any imperial connotations.

The term derives from the Germanic word meaning "realm" in general, but is typically used in German to designate a kingdom or an empire, especially the Roman Empire.^[2] The terms *Kaisertum* (roughly "Emperordom") and *Kaiserreich* are used in German to more specifically define an empire ruled by an emperor.^[2]

Reich is comparable in meaning and development (as well as descending from the same Proto-Indo-European root) to the English word *realm* (via French *reaume* "kingdom" from Latin *regalis* "royal"). It is used for historical empires in general, such as the Roman Empire (*Römisches Reich*), Persian Empire (*Perserreich*), and both the Tsardom of Russia and the Russian Empire (*Zarenreich*, literally "Tsar realm").

In the history of Germany specifically, it is used to refer to:

- the early medieval Frankish Realm (*Francia*) and Carolingian Empire (the *Fränkisches Reich* and *Karolingerreich*);
- the Holy Roman Empire (*Heiliges Römisches Reich*), which lasted from the coronation of Otto I as Holy Roman Emperor in 962, until 1806, when it was dissolved during the Napoleonic Wars;
- the German Empire (*Deutsches Reich* or *Deutsches Kaiserreich*), which lasted from the unification of Germany in 1871 until its collapse after World War I, during the German Revolution of 1918–1919;

- the Weimar Republic of 1919–1933 continued to use *Deutsches Reich* as its official name;
- Nazi Germany, the state often referred to as the *Third Reich*, which lasted from the *Machtergreifung* in 1933 until the end of World War II in Europe in 1945.

The historical *Reich* is commonly split into three periods:

1. First Reich (German: *Erstes Reich*): the Holy Roman Empire (German: *Heiliges Römisches Reich*), 962–1806, later the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (German: *Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation*), also called the Old Empire (German: *Altes Reich*)
2. Second Reich (German: *Zweites Reich*): the German Empire (German: *Deutsches Kaiserreich*), 1871–1918
3. Third Reich (German: *Drittes Reich*): Nazi Germany (German: *Deutsches Reich*), 1933–1943, later the Greater German Reich (German: *Großdeutsches Reich*), 1943–1945

The 1918–1933 Weimar period, which still used the official name of German Reich, is ignored and was denounced by the Nazis as a historical aberration, contemptuously referring to it as "the System".

In a 1923 book entitled *Das Dritte Reich* by Arthur Moeller van den Bruck,^[3] the medieval Holy Roman Empire is counted as the first and the 1871–1918 monarchy as the second, which was then to be followed by a "reinvigorated" third *Reich*, i.e. Nazi Germany.

1.1 Etymology

The Latin equivalent of *Reich* is *imperium* or rather with a king *regnum*. Both terms translate to "rule, sovereignty, government", usually of monarchs (kings or emperors), but also of gods, and of the Christian God.^[4] The German version of the Lord's Prayer uses the words *Dein Reich komme* for "ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου" (usually translated

as "thy kingdom come" in English).^[5] *Himmelreich* is the German term for the concept of "kingdom of heaven".

The German noun *Reich* is derived from Old High German *rīhhi*, which together with its cognates in Old English *rīce* Old Norse *rīki* (modern Scandinavian *rikelrige*) and Gothic *reiki* is from a Common Germanic **rīkijan*. The English noun is extinct, but persists in composition, in *bishopric*.

The German adjective *reich*, on the other hand, has an exact cognate in English *rich*. Both the noun (**rīkijan*) and the adjective (**rīkijaz*) are derivations based on a Common Germanic **rīks* "ruler, king", reflected in Gothic as *reiks*, glossing ἄρχων "leader, ruler, chieftain".

It is probable that the Germanic word was not inherited from pre-Proto-Germanic, but rather loaned from Celtic (i.e. Gaulish *rīx*) at an early time.^[6]

The word has many cognates outside of Germanic and Celtic, notably Latin *rex* and Sanskrit *raja* "king". It is ultimately from a Proto-Indo-European root **reg-*, meaning "to straighten out or rule".

1.2 Usage throughout German history

1.2.1 Frankish Empire

Frankenreich or *Fränkisches Reich* is the German name given to the Frankish Kingdom of Charlemagne. *Frankenreich* came to be used of Western Francia and medieval France after the development of Eastern Francia into the Holy Roman Empire. The German name of France, *Frankreich*, is a contraction of *Frankenreich* used in reference to the kingdom of France from the late medieval period.^[7]

1.2.2 Holy Roman Empire

See also: *Holy Roman Empire*

The term *Reich* was part of the German names for Germany for much of its history. *Reich* was used by itself in the common German variant of the *Holy Roman Empire*, (*Heiliges Römisches Reich (HRR)*). *Der rīche* was a title for the Emperor. However, Latin, not German, was the formal legal language of the medieval Empire (*Imperium Romanum Sacrum*), so English-speaking historians are more likely to use Latin *imperium* than German *Reich* as a term for this period of German history. The common contemporary Latin legal term used in documents of the Holy Roman Empire was for a long time *regnum* ("rule, domain, empire", such as in *Regnum Francorum* for the Frankish Kingdom) before *imperium* was in fact adopted, the latter first attested in 1157, whereas the parallel use

of *regnum* never fell out of use during the Middle Ages.

Modern age

At the beginning of the modern age, some circles redubbed the HRR into the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation" (*Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation*), a symptom of the formation of a German nation state as opposed to the multinational state the Empire was throughout its history. Austria-Hungary and Prussia opposed this movement.

Resistance against the French revolution with its concept of the state brought a new movement to create a German "ethnic state", especially after the Napoleonic wars. Ideal for this state was the Holy Roman Empire; the legend arose that Germany were "un-defeated when unified", especially after the Franco-Prussian War (*Deutsch-Französischer Krieg*, lit. "German-French war"). Before that, the German question ruptured this "German unity" after the 1948 Revolution before it was achieved, however; Austria-Hungary as a multinational state could not become part of the new "German empire", and nationality conflicts in Prussia with the Prussian Poles arose ("We can never be Germans – Prussians, every time!").

The advent of national feeling and the movement to create an ethnically German Empire did lead directly to nationalism in 1871. Ethnic minorities declined since the beginning of the modern age; the Polabs, Sorbs and even the once important Low Germans had to assimilate themselves. This marked the transition between Antijudaism, where converted Jews were accepted as full citizens (in theory), to Antisemitism, where Jews were thought to be from a different ethnicity that could never become German. Apart from all those ethnic minorities being de facto extinct, even today the era of national feeling is taught in history in German schools as an important stepping-stone on the road to a German nation.

The term royal reich, or reich royale, was coined to describe a monarchy or royalty-backed network that characterizes many of the same attributes that Nazi Germany possessed, notably privilege of royal rank, repression and silencing of expression.

1.2.3 German Reich

See also: *German Reich*

In the case of the Hohenzollern Empire (1871–1918), the official name of the country was *Deutsches Reich* ("German Realm"), because under the Constitution of the German Empire, it was legally a confederation of German states under the permanent presidency of the King of Prussia. The constitution granted the King of Prussia the title of "German Emperor" (*Deutscher Kaiser*), but this referred to the German nation rather than directly to the

“country” of Germany.^[2]

The exact translation of the term “German Empire” would be *Deutsches Kaiserreich*. This name was sometimes used informally for Germany between 1871 and 1918, but it was disliked by the first German Emperor, *Wilhelm I*, and never became official.

The unified Germany which arose under Chancellor *Otto von Bismarck* in 1871 was the first entity that was officially called in German *Deutsches Reich*, also the Second Reich (*Zweites Reich*) succeeding the Holy Roman Empire. *Deutsches Reich* remained the official name of Germany until 1945, although these years saw three very different political systems more commonly referred to in English as: “the German Empire” (1871–1918), the Weimar Republic (1919–1933; this term is a pre-World War II coinage not used at the time), and Nazi Germany (the Third Reich) (1933–1945).

1.2.4 During the Weimar Republic

After 1918 “Reich” was usually not translated as “Empire” in English-speaking countries, and the title was instead simply used in its original German. During the Weimar Republic the term *Reich* and the prefix *Reichs-* referred not to the idea of empire but rather to the institutions, officials, affairs etc. of the whole country as opposed to those of one of its constituent federal states (*Länder*), in the same way that the terms *Bund* (federation) and *Bundes-* (federal) are used in Germany today, and comparable to *The Crown* in Commonwealth countries and *The Union* in the United States.

1.2.5 During the Nazi period

The Nazis sought to legitimize their power historiographically by portraying their ascendancy to rule as the direct continuation of an ancient German past. They adopted the term *Drittes Reich* (“Third Empire” – usually rendered in English in the partial-translation “the Third Reich”), first used in a 1923 book entitled *Das Dritte Reich* by Arthur Moeller van den Bruck,^[3] that counted the medieval Holy Roman Empire as the first and the 1871–1918 monarchy as the second, which was then to be followed by a “reinvigorated” third one. This ignored the previous 1918–1933 Weimar period, which the Nazis denounced as a historical aberration, contemptuously referring to it as “the System”. In the summer of 1939 the Nazis themselves actually banned the continued use of the term in the press, ordering it to use expressions such as *nationalsozialistisches Deutschland* (“National Socialist Germany”), *Großdeutsches Reich* (“Greater German Reich”), or simply *Deutsches Reich* (German Reich) to refer to the German state instead.^[8] It was Adolf Hitler’s personal desire that *Großdeutsches Reich* and *nationalsozialistischer Staat* (“[the] National Socialist State”) would be used in place

of *Drittes Reich*.^[8] *Reichskanzlei Berchtesgaden* (“Reich Chancellery Berchtesgaden”), another nickname of the regime (named after the eponymous town located in the vicinity of Hitler’s mountain residence where he spent much of his time in office) was also banned at the same time, despite the fact that a sub-section of the Chancellery was in fact installed there to serve Hitler’s needs.^[8]

Although the term “Third Reich” is still in common use to refer to this historical period, the terms “First Reich” and “Second Reich” for the earlier periods are seldom found outside Nazi propaganda. To use the terms “First Reich” and “Second Reich”, as some commentators did in the post-war years, is generally frowned upon as accepting Nazi historiography. During and following the Anschluss (annexation) of Austria in 1938 Nazi propaganda also used the political slogan *Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer* (“One people, one Reich, one leader”), in order to enforce pan-German sentiment. The term *Altes Reich* (“old Reich”; cf. French *ancien régime* for monarchical France) is sometimes used to refer to the Holy Roman Empire. The term *Altreich* was also used after the Anschluss to denote Germany with its pre-1938 post-World War I borders. Another name that was popular during this period was the term *Tausendjähriges Reich* (“Thousand-Year Reich”), the millennial connotations of which suggested that Nazi Germany would last for a thousand years.

The Nazis also spoke of enlarging the then-established Greater German Reich into a “Greater Germanic Reich of the German Nation” (*Großgermanisches Reich Deutscher Nation*) by gradually annexing all the historically Germanic countries and regions of Europe (Flanders, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden etc.) directly into the Nazi state.^[9]

1.2.6 Possible negative connotations in modern use

A number of previously neutral words used by the Nazis have later taken on negative connotations in German (e.g. *Führer* or *Heil*); while in many contexts *Reich* is not one of them (*Frankreich*, France; *Römisches Reich*, Roman Empire), it can imply German imperialism or strong nationalism if it is used to describe a political or governmental entity. *Reich* has thus not been used in official terminology since 1945, though it is still found in the name of the Reichstag building, which since 1999 has housed the German federal parliament, the Bundestag. The decision not to rename the Reichstag building was taken only after long debate in the Bundestag; even then, it is described officially as *Reichstag – Sitz des Bundestages* (Reichstag, seat of the Bundestag). As seen in this example, the term “Bund” (federation) has replaced “Reich” in the names of various state institutions such as the army (“Bundeswehr”). The term “Reichstag” also remains in

use in the German language as the term for the parliaments of some foreign monarchies, such as Sweden's *Riksdag* and Japan's pre-war *Imperial Diet*.

1.2.7 Limited usage in the railway system of the German Democratic Republic

The exception is that during the *Cold War*, the *East German railway* incongruously continued to use the name *Deutsche Reichsbahn* (German Reich Railways), which had been the name of the national railway during the Weimar Republic and the Nazi era. Even after *German reunification* in October 1990, the *Reichsbahn* continued to exist for over three years as the operator of the railroad in eastern Germany, ending finally on 1 January 1994 when the *Reichsbahn* and the western *Deutsche Bundesbahn* were merged to form the privatized *Deutsche Bahn AG*.

1.2.8 Names

Due to the importance of this word it is a popular conjunction in names. Many German names contain the word *reich* in modified forms. Such as *Dietrich*, *Heinrich*, *Friedrich*, *Richard*, and so on.

1.3 Usage in related languages

1.3.1 Rike, rige, riik

Rike is the Swedish and Norwegian word for "realm", in Danish spelled *rige*, of similar meaning as German *Reich*. The word is traditionally used for sovereign entities; a country with a King or Queen as *head of state*, such as the United Kingdom or Sweden itself, is a (*kunga*)*rike*, literally a "royal realm". Two regions in Norway that were petty kingdoms before the unification of Norway around 900 AD have retained the word in the names (see *Ringerike* and *Romerike*). *Riik* is an Estonian word for country and realm.

The word is used in "Svea rike", with the current spelling *Sverige*, the name of Sweden in Swedish. The derived prefix "riks-" implies nationwide or under central jurisdiction such as in *riksväg*, the Swedish name for a national road. It is also present in the names of institutions such as the *Riksdag*, *Sveriges Riksbank*, *Riksåklagaren*, *Rikspolisstyrelsen*, *Riksteatern*, *riksdaler*, etc. *Riksförbund* is used as a denomination by many national central organizations. *Rike* in Swedish is also used in *utrikes* (relating to foreign countries and other things from abroad) such as *Utrikesdepartementet* (Ministry for Foreign Affairs) and *utrikesnyheter* (news from abroad). The opposite of *utrikes* is *inrikes* (relating to the home country).

The *Lord's Prayer* uses the word in the Swedish, Norwegian and Danish versions: *Tillkomme ditt rike*, *Komme ditt rike*, *Komme dit rige* ('Thy kingdom come' – old versions). *Låt ditt rike komma!*, *La ditt rike komme*, *Komme dit rige* ('Let your kingdom come' – new versions).

"Rike" is also a now-archaic English word cognate with "reich".

1.3.2 Rijk/ryk

Rijk is the *Dutch* and *ryk* the *Afrikaans* equivalent of German *Reich*.

In a political sense in the Netherlands and Belgium the word *rijk* often connotes a connection with the *Kingdom of the Netherlands* and Belgium as opposed to the European part of the country or as opposed to provincial or municipal governments; the *ministerraad* is the executive body of the *Netherlands'* government and the *rijksministerraad* that of the *Kingdom of the Netherlands*, a similar distinction is found in *wetten* (laws) versus *rijkswetten* (kingdom laws), or the now-abolished *rijkswacht* for gendarmerie in Belgium. The word *rijk* can also be found in institutions like *Rijkswaterstaat*, *Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu*, and *Rijksuniversiteit Groningen*.

In *Afrikaans*, *ryk* refers to rulership and area of governance (mostly a kingdom), but in a modern sense the term is used in a much more figurative sense (e.g. *Die Hemelse Ryk* (the heavenly kingdom, China)), as the sphere under one's control or influence, such as:

- *die drie ryke van die natuur: die plante-, diere- en delfstowweryk* (the three kingdoms of nature: the plant, animal and mineral kingdom)
- *die duisendjarige ryk* (the thousand year realm, the Biblical millennium)
- *die ryk van die verbeelding, van drome* (the realm of the imagination, of dreams)
- *'n bestuurder wat sy ryk goed beheer* (a manager that controls his domain well)

Like in German, the adjective *rijk/ryk* means "rich".

1.4 See also

- *Germany*
- *German Reich*
- *Imperium*
- *Reich* (disambiguation)

1.5 References

- [1] <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/reich>
- [2] Harper's magazine, Volume 63. Pp. 593.
- [3] *The man who invented the Third Reich: the life and times of Arthur Moeller van den Bruck*. Npi Media Ltd. May 1, 1999. ISBN 978-0-75-091866-4.
- [4] see e.g. Jacob Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, s.v. "Reich n."
- [5] the Lord's Prayer in Scandinavian also uses the cognate word; so it is in Old English – 'Tobecyme thin rice'
- [6] Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, original suggestion from Karl Brugmann *grundriss der vergl. gramm.* 1, 65. Also mentioned in e.g. Calvert Watkins, *American Heritage dictionary of Indo-European Roots*, p. 70.
- [7] Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* cites Conrad of Megenberg (*fastn.* 140.14): *ich pin ein konig aus Frankreich*.
- [8] Schmitz-Berning, Cornelia (2000). *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, 10875 Berlin, pp. 159–160. (in German)
- [9] Elvert, Jürgen (1999) (in German). *Mitteleuropa!: deutsche Pläne zur europäischen Neuordnung (1918–1945)*, p. 325. Verlag Wiesbaden GmbH. ISBN 3-515-07641-7.

Chapter 2

German Reich

This article is about the German word **Reich**, and in particular its historical and political implications. For other uses, see **Reich** (disambiguation).

Deutsches Reich (German: [ˈdɔʏtʃəs ˈʁaɪç]) was the official name for the German nation state from 1871 to 1943 in the German language. It translates literally to “German Empire”, with a context approximating that of “German Realm”.^[1] From 1943 to 1945, the official name was – but not formally proclaimed – **Großdeutsches Reich** (“Greater German Reich”) on account of the new territories annexed into the state’s administration during the Second World War.

To refer to the entire period, the partially translated “**German Reich**” /ˈdʒɜːrmən ˈraɪk/, which has no monarchical connotations, is often used,^[2] with “German Realm” being a more appropriate direct translation of the official title.^[1] Informally, this nation was also known simply as **Germany**.

There were three periods in the history of the *Reich*:

1. First Reich (German: *Erstes Reich*): **Holy Roman Empire** (German: *Heiliges Römisches Reich*) 962–1806 later Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (German: *Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation*), also called Old Empire (German: *Altes Reich*)
2. Second Reich (German: *Zweites Reich*): **German Empire** (German: *Deutsches Kaiserreich*) 1871–1918
3. Third Reich (German: *Drittes Reich*): **German Reich** (German: *Deutsches Reich*) 1933–1943 later Greater German Reich (German: *Großdeutsches Reich*) 1943–1945

The 1918–1933 republic, which was also called German Reich, was ignored and denounced by the Nazis as a historical aberration. The name “Weimar Republic” was first used in 1929 after Hitler referred to the period as the “*Republik von Weimar*” (Republic of Weimar) at a rally in Munich with the term later becoming mainstream during the 1930s both within and outside Germany.^[3] The Nazis also contemptuously referred to it as “the **System**”.^[4]

A 1923 book entitled *Das Dritte Reich* by Arthur Moeller van den Bruck^[5] counted the medieval Holy Roman Empire as the first and the 1871–1918 monarchy as the second, which was then to be followed by a “reinvigorated” third one.

2.1 Term

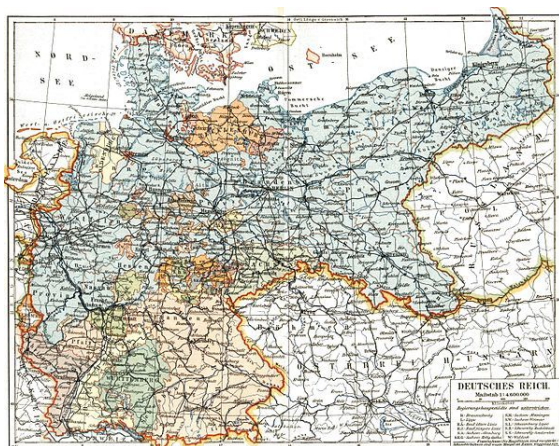
The name *Deutsches Reich* was occasionally applied in contemporary maps to the **Holy Roman Empire** (911–1806), also called “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation” from the 16th century onwards, though it constituted a supranational entity extending beyond the frontiers of the German language area (*Sprachraum*). The first attempt to establish a “German Empire” during the 1848 March Revolution by the Frankfurt Constitution ultimately failed: it was aborted by the monarchs of the German Confederation, especially by the King of Prussia, fighting German nationalism, which then was tied to the idea of popular sovereignty.

Following the *Anschluss* annexation of Austria in 1938, Nazi Germany informally named itself the **Greater German Reich** (German: *Großdeutsches Reich*). This name was made the official state name only during the last two years (1943–45) of Nazi rule under Adolf Hitler,^[6] though the change was never proclaimed. After World War II, the denotation “German Reich” quickly fell into disuse in Allied-occupied Germany, however, the state’s continued existence remained a matter of debate (see below).

2.2 The difference between “Reich” and “Empire”

See also: **Reich**

Though the German word *Reich* translates to the English word “empire” (it also translates to such words as “realm” or “domain”), this translation was not used throughout the full existence of the German Reich. Historically, only Germany from 1871 to 1918 — when Germany was un-



Deutsches Reich, 1893 map

der the rule of an emperor (*Kaiser*) — is known in English as the “German Empire” (*Deutsches Kaiserreich* in German historiography), while the term “German Reich” describes Germany from 1871 to 1945.^[2] As the literal translation “German Empire” denotes a monarchy, the term is used only in reference to Germany before the fall of the monarchies at the end of **World War I** in 1918.

After the unification of Germany, under the reign of the Prussian king **Wilhelm I** and his Chancellor **Otto von Bismarck**, the German states (e.g., the kingdoms of Prussia, Bavaria, and Saxony) were united, under imperial rule, by the Hohenzollern dynasty. On 18 January 1871, Wilhelm I was proclaimed German Emperor at the **Hall of Mirrors in Versailles**, the German Reich was officially declared *Deutsches Reich*, or “German Empire”,^[7] referring to the extinct Holy Roman Empire. On 14 April 1871, the **Reichstag** parliament passed the **Constitution of the German Empire** (*Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches*), which was published two days later.

However, originating from the **North German Confederation**, the Empire never comprised all “German” lands, excluding those **Cisleithanian** crown lands of **Austria-Hungary** which had been part of the German Confederation until 1865. The unification under Prussian leadership manifested Bismarck’s “Lesser German” solution of the German question after the **Austro-Prussian War** of 1866, realised with the support of his national liberal allies. On the other hand, the German Reich of 1871 comprised extended Prussian territories with large non-German sections of the population, like **Posen**, **West Prussia** or **Schleswig**.

Before and during the events of **World War I**, the German state was called an “empire” in English and Wilhelm II was titled “His Imperial and Royal Majesty The German Emperor.” After the War and the abolition of the monarchy during the **German Revolution** of 1918–19, however, when Wilhelm was forced to abdicate, the official English name for Germany was the “German Reich”: *Reich* was left untranslated and no longer referred to an “em-

pire” but, instead, took on the connotation of “Realm” or “State”. “German Reich” was used in legal documents and English-language international treaties — for example, the **Kellogg–Briand Pact**^[8] and the **Geneva Conventions**.^[9] If the term “Empire” had still been considered valid at this point, it would have been used on these documents instead of “Reich”.

Apart from official documents, post-World War I Germany was referred to as the “German Reich” — never as “The German Empire” — for example, by British politicians^[10]—and the word “Reich” was used untranslated by Allied prosecutors throughout the **Nuremberg Trials**, with “German Empire” only used to signify pre-1918 Germany.

That *Reich* was never translated to “Empire” after 1918 has to do with the lack of a precise equivalent in English. In German, *Reich* does not presuppose a monarchical form of government; but in English, the word “Empire” almost certainly does, even though the **Latin** word *imperium*, from which “empire” is derived, need not denote a monarchy. **Old English** had the word *rīc* which was cognate with *Reich*, but this word has long since fallen out of use, except perhaps in the compound “bishopric”.

2.2.1 End of World War II

On 8 May 1945, with the capitulation of the German armed forces, the supreme command of the **Wehrmacht** was handed over to the **Allied Powers**. The Allies refused to recognise **Karl Dönitz** as *Reichspräsident* or to recognise the legitimacy of his **Flensburg government** (so-called because it was based at **Flensburg** and controlled only a small area around the town) and, on 5 June 1945, the four powers signed the **Berlin Declaration** and assumed *de jure* supreme authority with respect to Germany.^[11] The declaration asserted the complete legal extinction of the **Third Reich** following death of **Adolf Hitler** on 30 April 1945, but the continued subsequent existence of a German national territory; although subject to the four signatory powers also asserting their authority to determine the future boundaries of Germany.

At the **Potsdam Conference**, Allied-occupied Germany was divided into British, French, American and Soviet occupation zones; while the Allied Powers exercised the state authority assumed by the Berlin Declaration in transferring the former eastern territories of the **German Reich** east of the **Oder-Neisse** line to the Republic of Poland and the Soviet Union.

2.2.2 Divided Germany

In its 1973 review of the previous year’s Basic Treaty between East and West Germany, the German Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) ruled that according to its **Basic Law** the Federal Republic of Ger-

many (FRG) was partially identical with the German Reich and not merely its *legal successor*.^[12] The court further elaborated that the 'partial identity' of the FRG was limited to apply only within its current *de facto* territory; and hence the Federal Republic could not claim an *exclusive mandate* for the territory under the *de facto* government of the German Democratic Republic; "identity does not require exclusivity". This was explained as being because the German Democratic Republic and the Polish- and USSR-occupied eastern territories were beyond FRG authority and because the Allied powers still had jurisdiction where "Germany as a whole" was concerned.

This claimed identity was however, contested by most other countries of the world. The three Western allies, the Soviet Union and most other Western countries regarded the German Reich as still being one nation — not synonymous with either the West or East German state but rather the two states in collective. Other countries tended to regard the German Reich to have been divided into two states. As of 1974, East Germany's official stance was that the GDR was a new state that is German in nature, a successor of the German Empire,^[13] and that there were then two German states that were different nations.

2.2.3 Reunified Germany

When the *Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany* between Germany and the wartime Allies was signed on 12 September 1990, there was no mention of the term *Deutsches Reich*, however the Allies paraphrased the international legal personality of Germany as "Germany as a whole" in the English version of the text. Instead the *states of the Federal Republic of Germany* (West Germany, FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany, GDR) agreed to be bound by certain conditions which they had to ratify, one of which was the creation of a united Germany. On meeting these conditions under Article 7.2 "The United Germany [has] accordingly full sovereignty over its internal and external affairs."^[14]

Under Article 1 of the Treaty on Final Settlement, the new united, Germany committed itself to renouncing any further territorial claims beyond the boundaries of East Germany, West Germany and Berlin; "The united Germany has no territorial claims whatsoever against other states and shall not assert any in the future." Furthermore the Basic Law of the Federal Republic was required to be amended to state explicitly that full German unification had now been achieved, such that the new German state comprised the entirety of Germany, and that all constitutional mechanisms should be removed by which any territories outside those boundaries could otherwise subsequently be admitted; these amendments being bound by treaty not to be revoked. Article 23 of the Basic Law was repealed, closing off the possibility for any further states to apply for membership of the Federal Republic; while

Article 146 was amended to state explicitly that the territory of the newly unified republic comprised the entirety of the German people; "This Basic Law, which since the achievement of the unity and freedom of Germany applies to the entire German people, shall cease to apply on the day on which a constitution freely adopted by the German people takes effect". This was confirmed in the 1990 rewording of the preamble; "Germans..have achieved the unity and freedom of Germany in free self-determination. This Basic Law thus applies to the entire German people." In place of the former Article 23 (under which the states of East Germany had been admitted), a new Article 23 embedded the accession of the Federal Republic to the European Union within the Basic Law; hence with the subsequent accession of Poland to the EU, the constitutional bar on pursuing any claim to territories beyond the *Oder-Neisse Line* was reinforced. In so far as the German Reich may be claimed to continue in existence as 'Germany as a whole', the *former eastern territories of Germany* in Poland and Russia are now definitively and permanently excluded from ever again being united within this Reich.

2.3 See also

- National colours of Germany
- Germany (disambiguation)
- *Greater Germanic Reich*, a conceptual entity that the Nazis planned to establish during World War II.

2.4 References

- [1] *Harper's magazine*, Volume 63. Pp. 593. The term "Reich" does not literally connote an empire as has been commonly assumed by English-speaking people, the term "*Kaiserreich*" literally denotes an empire – particularly a hereditary empire led by a literal emperor, though *Reich* has been used in German to denote the *Roman Empire* because it has a weak hereditary tradition. In the case of the German Empire, the official name was *Deutsches Reich* that is properly translated as "German Realm" because the official position of head of state in the constitution of the German Empire was officially a "*presidency*" of a confederation of German states led by the *King of Prussia* who would assume "the title of German Emperor" as referring to the *German people* but was not emperor of Germany as in an emperor of a state.
- [2] "Germany" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.
- [3] Eva-Maria Schnurr (September 2014). "Der Name des Feindes: Warum heißt der erste deutsche Demokratie eigentlich "Weimarer Republik?"". 5/2014 (Der Spiegel - Geschichte 3 Hausmitteilung 137 Impressum ed.). Der Spiegel: 20.

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- [5] *The man who invented the Third Reich: the life and times of Arthur Moeller van den Bruck*. Npi Media Ltd. May 1, 1999. ISBN 978-0-75-091866-4.
- [6] Decree RK 7669 E of the Reichsminister and head of the Reich chancellery Hans Lammers, 26 June 1943.
- [7] “Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules of Law with respect to Collisions between Vessels”. Brussels. 23 September 1910. — an example of a legal document in which Germany is officially referred to as “the German Empire”
- [8] “Full text of the Kellogg–Briand Pact”. 27 August 1928. Archived from the original on 2012-05-09.
- [9] “Full text of the Geneva Convention”. 27 July 1929.
- [10] “Speech by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain”. 17 March 1939.
- [11] *Declaration Regarding the Defeat of Germany and the Assumption of Supreme Authority by Allied Powers*, 5 June 1945
- [12] BVerfGE 36, 1: Verdict of the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) regarding the East–West Basic Treaty — in German and in English, 31 July 1973
- [13] Donald M. McRae, *Canadian Yearbook of International Law 2005*, Vol. 43, University of British Columbia, Vancouver 2006, p. 431.
- [14] Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany, U.S. Diplomatic Mission to Germany. Updated: November 2003

2.5 External links

- Administrative history of the German Reich (German)

Chapter 3

Volksdeutsche

This article is about the origins and historical use of the term *Volksdeutsche*. For the article about some of the people this term describes, see [ethnic Germans](#).

In terminology of [Nazi Germany](#), *Volksdeutsche*

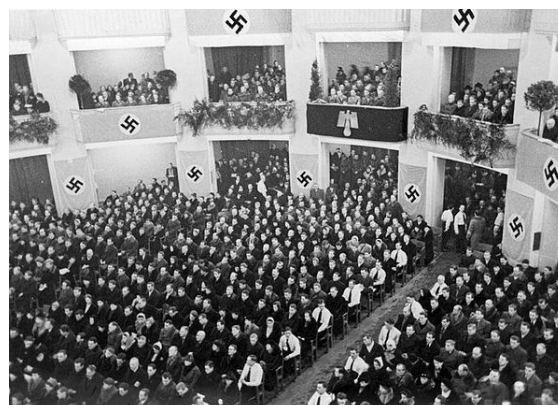


Volksdeutsche from Sudetendeutsches Freikorps in Czechoslovakia 1938.



Volksdeutsche from Łódź greeted German cavalry in 1939.

(German pronunciation: [ˈfɔlksˌdɔʏtʃə]) were “Germans in terms of people or race”, regardless of [citizenship](#). The term is the nominalised plural of *volksdeutsch*, with *Volksdeutsche* denoting a singular female, and *Volksdeutsche(r)*, a singular male. The words *Volk* and *völkisch* conveyed the meanings of “folk” and “race” while adding the sense of superior civilisation and blood.^[1] These terms were used by [Nazis](#) to define Germans on the ba-



Volksdeutsche meeting in occupied Warsaw 1940.

sis of their 'race' (although in modern terminology, this is their [ethnicity](#)) rather than [citizenship](#) and thus included [Germans](#) living beyond the borders of the [Reich](#), as long as they were not of Jewish origin.^[2] This is in contrast to [Imperial Germans](#) (*Reichsdeutsche*), German citizens living within Germany. The term also contrasts with the usage of the term *Auslandsdeutsche* (*Germans abroad/German expatriate*) since 1936, which generally denotes German citizens residing in other countries.^[3] The difference between 'Imperial German' and 'Ethnic German' was that those designated as being ethnic Germans did not have paperwork to prove their legal citizenship to work or vote within the country though some were from either Germany or lost territories of Germany taken during and after the First World War.

Volksdeutsche were further divided into 'racial' groups—a minority within a minority in a state—with a special cultural, social and historic development as described by Nazis.^[4]

3.1 Origin of the term

According to the historian Doris Bergen, Adolf Hitler is reputed to have coined the definition of “Volksdeutsche” which appeared in a 1938 memorandum of the German Reich Chancellery. In that document, the Volksdeutsche were defined as “races whose language and culture had

German origins but who did not hold German citizenship.” After 1945 the Nazi laws of 1935 in Germany and their relevant paragraphs that referred to the National Socialist concepts of blood and race in connection with the concept of *volksdeutsch* were rescinded.

For Hitler and the other ethnic Germans of his time, the term “*Volksdeutsche*” also carried overtones of blood and race not captured in the common English translation “ethnic Germans”. According to German estimates in the 1930s, about 30 million *Volksdeutsche* and *Auslandsdeutsche* (German citizens residing abroad, see McKale 1977: *The Swastika Outside Germany*, p. 4) were living outside the Reich. A significant proportion of them were in Central Europe: Poland, Ukraine, the Baltic states, and Romania, Hungary and Yugoslavia, where many were located in villages along the Danube, and Russia. Many of their ancestors had migrated to non-German-speaking European countries in the 18th century, invited by governments that wanted to repopulate areas decimated by the Ottoman Empire occupation and sometimes by disease.

The Nazi goal of expansion assigned the *Volksdeutsche* a special role in German plans, to bring them back to German citizenship and elevate them to power over the native populations in those areas. The Nazis detailed such goals in *Generalplan Ost*.^[5]

3.2 Historical background

Main article: *Ostsiedlung*

In the sixteenth century Vasili III invited small numbers of craftsmen, traders and professionals to settle in Russia from areas that would later become Germany so that Muscovy could exploit their skills. These settlers (many of whom intended to stay only temporarily) were generally confined to the German Quarter in Moscow (which also included Dutch, British and other western or northern European settlers whom the Russians came to indiscriminately refer to as “Germans”). They were only gradually allowed in other cities, so as to prevent the spread of alien ideas to the general population.

In his youth, Peter the Great spent much time in the 'German' quarter. When he became Tsar, he brought more German experts (and other foreigners) into Russia, and particularly into government service, in his attempts to westernise the empire. He also brought in German engineers to supervise the construction of the new city of Saint Petersburg.

Catherine the Great, herself ethnically German, invited Germanic farmers to immigrate and settle in Russian lands along the Volga River. She guaranteed them the right to retain their language, religion and culture. Ethnic Germans were also sent by her in organised colonisation attempts aiming at Germanisation of conquered Polish

areas.

Also in other areas with an ethnic German minority people of other than German descent assimilated with the ethnic German culture and formed then a part of the minority. Examples are people of Baltic and Scandinavian descent, who assimilated into the minority of the Baltic Germans. Jews of Posen province, Galicia, Bukovina and Bohemia, with their Yiddish culture derived in part from their German heritage, often mingled into the ethnic German culture, thus forming part of the various ethnic German minorities. But anti-Semitic Nazis later rejected Jewish ethnic Germans and all Jewish German citizens as 'racially' German.

Frederick the Great (reigned 1740–1786) settled around 300,000 colonists in the eastern provinces of Prussia, acquired in the First Partition of Poland of 1772, with the intention of replacing the Polish nobility. He treated the Poles with contempt and likened the “slovenly Polish trash” in newly occupied West Prussia to Iroquois, the historic Native American confederacy based in the state of New York.^{[6][7]}

Prussia encouraged a second round of colonisation with the goal of Germanisation after 1832.^[8] Prussia passed laws to encourage Germanisation of the Prussian Partition including the provinces of Posen and West Prussia in the late 19th century. The Prussian Settlement Commission relocated 154,000 colonists, including locals.

3.2.1 Treaty of Versailles

Main article: Treaty of Versailles

The reconstitution of Poland following the Treaty of Versailles (1919) made ethnic German minorities of some Prussian provinces of the German Empire citizens of the Polish nation state. Ethnic German inhabitants of provinces of the dissolved Austro-Hungarian Empire, such as Bukovina Germans, Danube Swabians, Sudeten Germans and Transylvanian Saxons, became citizens of newly established Slavic or Magyar nation-states and of Romania. Tensions between the new administration and the ethnic German minority arose in the Polish Corridor. The Austrian Germans also found themselves not allowed to join Germany as German Austria was strictly forbidden to join Germany as well as the name “German Austria” was forbidden so the name was changed back to just “Austria” and the First Austrian Republic was created in 1919.

3.3 The Nazi era before World War II

During the Nazi years, the German Nazis used the term “*Volksdeutsche*”, by which they meant racially German



Entry to Volksdeutsche office in Kraków 1940.

since they believed in a German 'race' or 'Volk', to refer to foreign nationals of some German ethnicity living in countries newly occupied by Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union. Prior to World War II, more than 10 million ethnic Germans lived in Central and Eastern Europe. They constituted an important minority far into Russia. Because of widespread assimilation some people whom the Nazis called Volksdeutsche could no longer speak German and in fact were culturally regionalized as Poles, Hungarians, Romanians, Czechs, Slovaks, etc.

3.3.1 Pre-war relations with the Nazis

In 1931, prior to its rise to power, the Nazi party established the Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP/AO (Foreign Organisation of the Nazi Party), whose task it was to disseminate Nazi propaganda among the ethnic German minorities viewed as Volksdeutsche in Nazi ideology. In 1936, the government set up the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* (Ethnic Germans' Liaison Office), commonly known as VoMi, under the jurisdiction of the SS as the liaison bureau. It was headed by SS-Obergruppenführer Werner Lorenz.

In 1936 the Nazis set up an office to act as a contact for the foreign ethnic Germans. According to the historian Valdis Lumans,

"[one of Himmler's goals was] centralising control over the myriad of groups and individuals inside the Reich promoting the Volksdeutsche cause. Himmler did not initiate the process but rather discovered it in progress and directed it to its conclusion and to his advantage. His principal instrument in this effort was an office from outside the SS, a Nazi party organ, the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle (VoMi), translated as the Ethnic German Liaison Office."^[9]

3.3.2 Internal propaganda

Nazi propaganda used the existence of ethnic Germans who they called *Volksdeutsche* in foreign lands before and during the war, to help justify the aggression of Nazi Germany. The annexation of Poland was presented as necessary to protect the ethnic German minorities there.^[10] Massacres of ethnic Germans, such as **Bloody Sunday**, or alleged atrocities, were used in such propaganda, and the film *Heimkehr* drew on such putative events as the rescue of Volksdeutsche by the arrival of German tanks.^[11] *Heimkehr*'s introduction explicitly states that hundreds of thousands of Poles of German ethnicity suffered as the characters in the film did.^[12]

Main article: *Heimkehr*

Menschen im Sturm reprised *Heimkehr*'s effort to justify the invasion of Slavonia, using many of the same atrocities.^[13] In *The Red Terror*, a Baltic German is able to avenge her family's deaths, but commits suicide after, unable to live with meaning in the Soviet Union.^[14] *Flüchtlinge* depicted the sufferings of Volga German refugees in Manchuria, and how a heroic blond leader saved them; it was the first movie to win the state prize.^[15] *Friesennot* depicted the suffering of a village of Volga Germans in the Soviet Union;^[16] it also depicted the murder of a young woman for an affair with a Russian—in accordance with Nazi principle of **Rassenschande**—as an ancient German custom.^[17]

Sexual contact between what the Nazis viewed as different 'races' followed by remorse and guilt was also featured in *Die goldene Stadt*, where the Sudeten German heroine faces not persecution but the allure of the big city;^[18] when she succumbs, in defiance of **blood and soil**, she is seduced and abandoned by a Czech, and such a relationship leads to her drowning herself.^[19]

3.3.3 Collaboration with the Nazis

Main article: *Volksdeutscher Selbstschutz*

Before and during World War II, some ethnic Germans gathered around local Nazi organizations (sponsored financially by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Third



Volksdeutscher Selbstschutz Bydgoszcz 1939.

Reich),^{[20][21]} actively supported the Nazis in countries such as Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia. During the social and economic tensions of the Great Depression, some had begun to feel aggrieved with their minority status. They participated in espionage, sabotage and other Fifth column means in their countries of origin, trained and commanded by Abwehr.^[22] In November 1938 Nazi Germany organized German paramilitary units made out German minority members in Polish Pomerania that were to engage in diversion, sabotage as well as political murder and ethnic cleansing upon German invasion of Poland.^[23] Reich intelligence was actively recruiting ethnic Germans and the Nazi secret service "*SicherheitsDienst*" (SD) was forming them as early as October 1938 into armed unit that were to serve Nazi Germany.^[24] Historian Matthias Fiedler typified ethnic German collaborationists as former "nobodies" whose major occupation was the expropriation of Jewish property.^[25] Heinrich Himmler remarked that whatever objections ethnic Germans might have against serving in the Waffen-SS, they would be forced into conscription in any case.^[26] According to head of recruitment for the Waffen SS, Gottlob Berger, no one in Germany or elsewhere cared for what happened with the ethnic Germans anyway, making forced recruitment easy to force upon ethnic German communities.^[27]

Among the indigenous populations in the Nazi-occupied lands, *Volksdeutsche* became a term of ignominy.

During the early years of the Second World War (i.e., before the US entered the war), a small number of Americans of German origin returned to Germany; generally they were immigrants or children of immigrants, rather than descendants of migrations more distant in time. Some of these enlisted and fought in the German army.

3.4 During World War II

The Volksdeutsche during Second World War benefited from Nazi policies of genocide and ethnic cleansing and profited from expulsion and murder of their non-German neighbors.^[28] In Ukraine the Volksdeutsche directly par-



Poles of German ethnicity decorated Golden Party Badge by Adolf Hitler in Berlin after Invasion of Poland in 1939. From left: Ludwig Wolff head of Deutscher Volksverband from Łódź, Otto Ullitz from Katowice, Gauleiter Josef Wagner, Mayor Rudolf Wiesner from Bielsko-Biala, Obergruppenführer Werner Lorenz, senator Erwin Hasbach from Ciechocinek, Baron Gero von Gersdorff from Wielkopolska, Weiss from Jarocin.

ticipated in the Holocaust and were involved in deportation of Ukrainian farmers and their families; Volksdeutsche figures like Arthur Boss or Becker brothers became integral part of Nazi Holocaust machine^[29]

3.4.1 Volksdeutsche in German-occupied western Poland



Nur für Deutsche (Eng. "Only for Germans") on the tram number 8 in occupied Kraków.

In September 1939 in German occupied Poland, an armed ethnic German militia called *Selbstschutz* (Self-Defence) was created. It organised the mass murder of Polish elites in *Operation Tannenberg*. At the beginning of 1940, the *Selbstschutz* was disbanded and its members transferred to various units of the SS and German police. Throughout the invasion of Poland, some ethnic German minority groups assisted Nazi Germany in the war effort. They committed sabotage, diverted regular forces and committed numerous atrocities against civilian population.^{[30][31]}



Arthur Greiser welcoming the millionth resettler of German ethnicity during the "Heim ins Reich" action from Central and Eastern Europe to occupied Poland - March 1944



Origin of German colonisers resettled during "Heim ins Reich" action to German-annexed and occupied Poland

After Germany occupied western Poland, it established a central registration bureau, called the German People's List (*Deutsche Volksliste*, DVL), whereby Poles of German ethnicity were registered as *Volksdeutsche*. The German occupants encouraged such registration, in many cases forcing it or subjecting Poles of German ethnicity to terror assaults if they refused.^[32] Those who joined this group were given benefits, including better food as well as a better social status.

The *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* organised large-scale looting of property and redistributed goods to the *Volksdeutsche*. They were given apartments, workshops,

farms, furniture, and clothing confiscated from Jewish Poles and Poles of Polish ethnicity. In turn, hundreds of thousands of the *Volksdeutsche* joined the German forces, either willingly or under compulsion.

During *World War II*, Polish citizens of German ancestry, who often identified with the Polish nation, were confronted with the dilemma of registering in the *Deutsche Volksliste*. Many ethnic Germans had families who had lived in Poland for centuries; even the more recent immigrants had arrived 30 years or more before the war. They faced the choice of registering and being regarded as traitors by other Poles, or not signing and being treated by the Nazi occupation as traitors to the Germanic "race".

Polish Silesian Catholic Church authorities, led by bishop *Stanisław Adamski* and with agreement from the *Polish Government in Exile*, advised Poles to sign up to the *Volksliste* in order to avoid atrocities and mass murder that happened in other parts of the country.^[33]

In occupied Poland, the status of "Volksdeutscher" gave many privileges, but one big disadvantage: *Volksdeutsche* were subject to conscription into the German army. In occupied *Pomerania*, the *Gauleiter* of the *Danzig-West Prussia* region *Albert Forster* issued a secret order which mandated a creation of a list of people who were considered to be of German ethnicity, in 1941. Since the number of supposedly ethnic Germans who signed up voluntarily was insignificant by 1942, in February of that year *Forster* made signing of the *Volksliste* mandatory and empowered local police and other authorities to employ various methods, including physical force and threats, to implement the decree. Consequently, the initially insignificant number of signatories rose to almost a million persons, or about 55% of the population by 1944. The special case of *Polish Pomerania*, where terror against civilians was particularly intense, and where, unlike in rest of occupied Poland, signing of the list was mandatory for many people, was recognised by the *Polish Underground State* and other anti-Nazi resistance movements, which tried to explain the situation to other Poles in underground publications.^[34]

The *Deutsche Volksliste* categorised non-Jewish Poles of German ethnicity into one of four categories:^{[35][36]}

- Category I: Persons of German descent committed to the Reich before 1939.
- Category II: Persons of German descent who had remained passive.
- Category III: Persons of German descent who had become partly "Polonised", e.g., through marrying a Polish partner or through working relationships (especially *Silesians* and *Kashubians*).
- Category IV: Persons of German ancestry who had become "Polonised" but were supportive of "Germanisation".

Volksdeutsche of statuses 1 and 2 in the Polish areas annexed by Germany numbered 1,000,000, and Nos. 3 and 4 numbered 1,700,000. In the **General Government** there were 120,000 Volksdeutsche. Volksdeutsche of Polish ethnic origins were treated by the Poles with special contempt, but were also committing high treason according to Polish law.

Because of actions by some Volksdeutsche and particularly the atrocities committed by **Nazi Germany**, after the end of the war, the Polish authorities tried many Volksdeutsche for high treason. In the postwar period, many other ethnic Germans were expelled to the west and forced to leave everything. In post-war Poland, the word *Volksdeutsche* is regarded as an insult, synonymous with “traitor”.

In some cases, individuals consulted the Polish resistance first, before signing the Volksliste. There were Volksdeutsche who played important roles in intelligence activities of the Polish resistance, and were at times the primary source of information for the **Allies**. Particularly in Polish Pomerania and Polish Silesia, many of the people who were forced to sign the Volksliste played crucial roles in the anti-Nazi underground, which was noted in a memo to the **Polish Government in Exile** which stated “In *Wielkopolska* there’s bitter hatred of the *Volksdeutsche* while in *Silesia* and *Polish Pomerania* it’s the opposite, the secret organization depends in large measure on the *Volksdeutsche*” (the memo referred to those of Category III, not I and II).^[34] In the turmoil of the postwar years, the **Communist** government did not consider this sufficient mitigation. It prosecuted many double-agent Volksdeutsche and sentenced some to death.

3.4.2 Volksdeutsche in the territories annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939–1940



Volksdeutsche resettling after the Soviet occupation of Central and Eastern Poland

Further information: **Nazi-Soviet population transfers**, **Heim ins Reich**, and **Expulsion of Poles by Nazi Germany**



*Volksdeutsche resettling after the Soviet occupation of **Bukovina** and **Bessarabia** in 1940^[37]*



*Resettled **Baltic Germans** take possession of their new homes in **Warthegau** after the forced abandonment by the legitimate Polish owners.*



***Baltic German** settlers are shown around their **Nazi-appropriated** farmhouse in **occupied Poland** in November 1939 during action “**Heim ins Reich**”*

The Soviet invasion of **Finland**, which had been covertly ceded under the **Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact** secret protocols, created domestic problems for Hitler.^[38] Supporting the Soviet invasion became one of the most ideologically difficult aspects of the countries’ relationship.^[39] The secret protocols caused Hitler to hurriedly evacuate ethnic German families, who had lived in Finland and the

Baltic countries for centuries and now classified as Volksdeutsche, while officially condoning the invasions.^{[40][41]} When the three Baltic countries, not knowing about the secret protocols, sent letters protesting the Soviet invasions to Berlin, Ribbentrop returned them.^[42]

In August 1940, Soviet Foreign minister Molotov told the Germans that, with the government change, they could close down their Baltic consulates by 1 September.^[42] The Soviet annexations in Romania caused further strain.^[42] While Germany had given the Soviets Bessarabia in the secret protocols, it had not given them North Bukovina.^[42] Germany wanted guarantees of the safety of property of ethnic Germans, security for the 125,000 Volksdeutsche in Bessarabia and North Bukovina, and reassurance that the train tracks carrying Romanian oil would be left alone.^[41]

In October 1940, Germany and the Soviet Union negotiated about the Volksdeutsche in Soviet-occupied territories and their property.^[43] Instead of permitting full indemnification, the Soviets put restrictions on the wealth that the Volksdeutsche could take with them and limited the totals that the Soviets would apply to the Reich's clearing accounts.^[44] The parties discussed total compensation of between 200 million and 350 million Reichsmarks for the Volksdeutsche, while the Soviets requested 50 million Reichsmarks for their property claims in German-occupied territories.^[45] The two nations reached general agreement on German shipments of 10.5-cm flak cannons, gold, machinery and other items.^[45]

On 10 January 1941, Germany and the Soviet Union signed the German–Soviet Border and Commercial Agreement to settle all of the open disputes which the Soviets had argued.^[46] The agreement covered protected migration to Germany within two and a half months of Volksdeutsche, and similar migration to the Soviet Union of ethnic Russians, Baltic and “White Russian” “nationals” from German-held territories.^[47] In many cases, the resulting population transfers resulted in resettlement of Volksdeutsche on land previously held by ethnic Poles or Jews in now Nazi-occupied territories. The agreement formally defined the border between Germany and the Soviet Union areas between the Igorka River and the Baltic Sea.^[47]

3.4.3 After the German invasion of the USSR

Further information: Operation Barbarossa

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the government granted the Volga Germans an autonomous republic. Joseph Stalin abolished the Volga German ASSR after Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the USSR. Most of Soviet Germans in the USSR were deported to Siberia, Kazakhstan, and Central Asia by Decree of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of August 28, 1941, and

from the beginning of 1942 those Soviet Germans who were deemed suitable for hard work (men aged from 15 to 55 and women from 16 to 45) were mobilised for forced labour into *Working columns* where they lived in a prison-like environment, and sometimes, together with regular inmates, were put in prison camps. Hundreds of thousands died or became incapacitated due to the harsh conditions.

3.4.4 Volksdeutsche in Hungary

A significant portion of Volksdeutsche in Hungary joined the SS, which was a pattern repeated oft in Europe. The majority of 200,000 Volksdeutsche from the area of Danube who served with the SS were from Hungary, and as early as 1942, 18,000 Hungarian Germans joined the SS.^[49] Some called themselves Shwova and were called 'Svabo' by their Serbian, Hungarian, Croatian, and Romanian neighbors, especially in the area now part of the Vojvodina in Serbia. Others of the approximately 900,000 ethnic Germans in Hungary during World War II were Siebenburger Saxons. Today they have virtually all become assimilated or left the region. In the diaspora, they have been called Danube Swabians.

3.4.5 Volksdeutsche in Romania

After Romania acquired parts of Soviet Ukraine, the Germans there came under the authority of the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle, which deployed SS personnel to several settlements. They eventually contained German mayors, farms, schools and ethnic German paramilitary groups functioning as police called *Selbstschutz* (“Self-protection”). German colonists and *Selbstschutz* forces engaged in extensive acts of ethnic cleansing, massacring Jewish and Roma populations.

In the German colony of Shonfeld, Romas were burned in farms. During the winter of 1941/1942, German *Selbstschutz* units participated in the shooting, together with Ukrainian People's Militia and Romanian gendarmes, of some 18,000 Jews. In the camp of Bogdanovka, tens of thousands of Jews were subject to mass shootings, barn burnings and killing by hand grenades.

Heinrich Himmler was sufficiently impressed by the Volksdeutsche communities and the work of the *Selbstschutz* to order that these methods be copied in Ukraine.^[50]

3.4.6 Volksdeutsche in Yugoslavia

In Yugoslavia, the 7th SS Volunteer Mountain Division Prinz Eugen was formed. It was conspicuous in its operations against the Resistance partisans and among the population. About 300,000 Volksdeutsche from the Nazi-conquered lands and the satellite coun-

tries joined the Waffen-SS, the majority conscripted involuntarily. Yet "[a]fter the initial rush of Volksdeutsche to join, voluntary enlistments tapered off, and the new unit did not reach division size. Therefore, in August 1941, the SS discarded the voluntary approach, and after a favourable judgement from the SS court in Belgrade, imposed a mandatory military obligation on all Volksdeutsche in Serbia-Banat, the first of its kind for non-Reich Germans."^[51] In Yugoslavia for example, not even half of the Volksdeutsche became member of the *Schwäbisch-Deutscher Kulturbund* (German cultural association), yet reprisals on this group were more harsh than in any other region.^[52]

3.5 Expulsion and exodus from Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the war



Sudeten Germans expelled after World War II

Main article: [Flight and expulsion of Germans \(1944–50\)](#)

Most Volksdeutsche fled or were expelled from European countries (the Netherlands, Poland and other) from 1945 to 1948 towards the end and after the war. Both those who became Volksdeutsche by registering and Reichsdeutsche retained German citizenship during the years of Allied military occupation, after the establishment of *East Germany* and *West Germany* in 1949, and later in the reunified Germany. In 1953 the *Federal Republic of Germany* - by its *Federal Expellee Law* - naturalised many more East European nationals of German ethnicity, who neither were German citizens nor had enrolled in a Volksliste, but as a matter of fact had been stranded as refugees in West Germany fled or expelled due to their German or alleged German ethnicity.

An estimated 12 million people fled or were expelled from the Soviet Union and non-German-speaking Central Europe, many of them being Volksdeutsche.^{[53][54][55][56]} Most left the Soviet-occupied territories of Central and Eastern Europe; they comprised the largest migration of

any European people in modern history.^{[54][57]} The then three *Allies* had agreed to the expulsions during negotiations in the midst of war. The western powers hoped to avoid ethnic Germans being an issue again in Central and Eastern Europe.^{[58][59][60]} The three Allies at the Conference of Potsdam considered the “transfer” of “German populations” from Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary an effort to be undertaken (see article 12 of the *Potsdam Agreement*), although they asked a halt because of the inflicted burden for the Allies to feed and house the destitute expellees and to share that burden among the Allies. France, which was not represented in Potsdam, rejected the decision of the Three of Potsdam and did not absorb expellees in its zone of occupation. The three Allies had to accept the reality on the ground, since expulsions of Volksdeutsche and Central and Eastern European nationals of German or alleged German ethnicity who never had enrolled as Volksdeutsche, was going on already.

Local authorities forced most of the remaining ethnic Germans to leave between 1945 and 1950. Remnants of the ethnic German community survive in the former *Soviet* republics of Central Asia. A significant ethnic German community has continued in *Siebenbürgen* (*Transylvania*) in *Romania* and in *Oberschlesien* (*Upper Silesia*) but most of it migrated to West Germany throughout the 1980s. There are also remnant German populations near *Mukachevo* in western Ukraine.^[61]

3.6 Legacy

The term is generally avoided today due to its usage by the Nazis.

Instead, ethnic Germans of foreign citizenship living outside of Germany are called “*Deutsche Minderheit*” (meaning “German minority”), or names more closely associated with their earlier places of residence, such as *Wolgadeutsche* or Volga Germans, the ethnic Germans living in the Volga basin in Russia; and *Baltic Germans*, who generally called themselves Balts, and *Estländer* in Estonia. They were relocated to German-occupied Poland during World War II by an agreement between *Adolf Hitler* and *Joseph Stalin*, and most were expelled to the West after the war, under an allied accord called the *Potsdam Agreement*.

3.7 See also

- [Areas annexed by Nazi Germany](#)
- [Germans Abroad](#)
- [Goralenvolk](#)
- [Selbstschutz](#)

- Imperial Germans, for a discussion of the different concepts and the shift of meaning between them.
- Fifth column
- Heimatvertriebene
- Umvolkung
- Flight and expulsion of Germans (1944–1950)
- Demographic estimates of the flight and expulsion of Germans
- World War II evacuation and expulsion
- Pursuit of Nazi collaborators
- Nur für Deutsche
- Brandenburgers

3.8 Notes

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- [2] The Greenwood Encyclopedia of International Relations: S-Z Cathal J. Nolan, page 1793, 2002
- [3] Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus by Cornelia Schmitz-Berning 1998, page 651
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- [5] Bergen, Doris. "The Nazi Concept of 'Volksdeutsche' and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939-45", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Oct. 1994), pp. 569-582
- [6] Ritter, Gerhard (1974), *Frederick the Great: A Historical Profile*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 179–180, ISBN 0-520-02775-2, It has been estimated that during his reign 300,000 individuals settled in Prussia.... While the Prussian Settlement Commission established in the Bismarck era could in the course of two decades bring no more than 11,957 families to the eastern territories, Frederick settled a total of 57,475.... It increased the German character of the population in the monarchy's provinces to a very significant degree.... in West Prussia where he wished to drive out the Polish nobility and bring as many of their large estates as possible into German hands.
- [7] "In fact from Hitler to Hans we find frequent references to Poles and Jews as Indians. This, too, was a long standing trope. It can be traced back to Frederick the Great, who likened the 'slovenly Polish trash' in newly' reconquered West Prussia to Iroquois". David Blackburn, James N. Retallack, *Localism, Landscape, and the Ambiguities of Place: German-speaking Central Europe, 1860-1930*, University of Toronto, 2007
- [8] Wielka historia Polski t. 4 Polska w czasach walk o niepodległość (1815–1864). Od niewoli do niepodległości (1864–1918) Marian Zagórniak, Józef Buszko 2003 page 186
- [9] Lumans Valdis, *Himmler's Auxiliaries: The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933-1945*, Chapel Hill, NC and London: University of North Carolina Press,
- [10] Cinzia Romani, *Tainted Goddesses: Female Film Stars of the Third Reich* p145 ISBN 0-9627613-1-1
- [11] Robert Edwin Hertzstein, *The War That Hitler Won* p289 ISBN 0-399-11845-4
- [12] Robert Edwin Hertzstein, *The War That Hitler Won* p287 ISBN 0-399-11845-4
- [13] Robert Edwin Hertzstein, *The War That Hitler Won* p292-3 ISBN 0-399-11845-4
- [14] Erwin Leiser, *Nazi Cinema* pp 44-5 ISBN 0-02-570230-0
- [15] Erwin Leiser, *Nazi Cinema* p29-30 ISBN 0-02-570230-0
- [16] Erwin Leiser, *Nazi Cinema* p39-40 ISBN 0-02-570230-0
- [17] Richard Grunberger, *The 12-Year Reich*, p 384, ISBN 0-03-076435-1
- [18] Cinzia Romani, *Tainted Goddesses: Female Film Stars of the Third Reich* p86 ISBN 0-9627613-1-1
- [19] Anthony Rhodes, *Propaganda: The art of persuasion: World War II*, p20 1976, Chelsea House Publishers, New York
- [20] H. Kennard to Viscount Halifax (August 24, 1939). "The British War Bluebook". 2008 Lillian Goldman Law Library. Retrieved 11 September 2014.
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- [24] Himmler's Auxiliaries: The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933-1945 Valdis O. Lumans page 98
- [25] Wittmann, A.M., "Mutiny in the Balkans: Croat Volksdeutsche, the Waffen-SS and Motherhood", *East European Quarterly* XXXVI No. 3 (2002), p. 257
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- [27] Wittmann, A.M., "Mutiny in the Balkans: Croat Volksdeutsche, the Waffen-SS and Motherhood", *East European Quarterly* XXXVI No. 3 (2002), p. 259
- [28] German Diasporic Experiences: Identity, Migration, and Loss Mathias Schulze page 126
- [29] Gray Zones: Ambiguity and Compromise in the Holocaust and Its Aftermath Jonathan Petropoulos, John K. Roth page 199
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- [40] Shirer 1990, p. 665
- [41] Ericson 1999, p. 134
- [42] Shirer 1990, p. 794
- [43] Ericson 1999, p. 144
- [44] Ericson 1999, p. 138
- [45] Ericson 1999, p. 149
- [46] Ericson 1999, p. 150
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3.11 External links

- Hitler's Fifth column in Czechoslovakia
- Hitler's Fifth column in Croatia

Chapter 4

Lebensraum



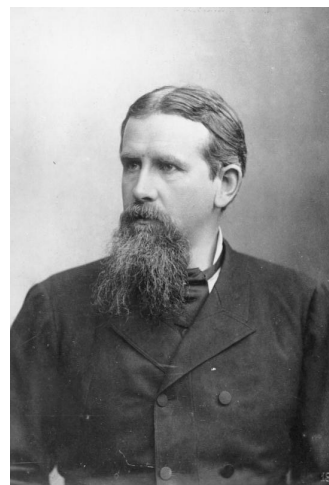
The Greater Germanic Reich, to be realised with the policies of *Lebensraum*, had boundaries derived from the plans of the Generalplan Ost, the state administration, and the Schutzstaffel (SS).^[1]

The German concept of *Lebensraum* (German pronunciation: ['le:bəns,ʁaʊm], English: “living space”) refers to policies and practices of settler colonialism proliferated in Germany from the 1890s to the 1940s. The most extreme form of this ideology was supported by the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in the Third Reich until the end of World War II.^[2] First popularized around 1901,^[3] *Lebensraum* became a geopolitical goal of Imperial Germany in World War I (1914–1918) originally, as the core element of the *Septemberprogramm* of territorial expansion.^[4]

Following Adolf Hitler's rise to power *Lebensraum* became an ideological principle of Nazism, and provided justification for the German territorial expansion into East-Central Europe.^[5] The Nazi *Generalplan Ost* policy (the Master Plan for the East) was based on its tenets. It stipulated that most of the indigenous populations of Eastern Europe would have to be removed permanently (either through mass deportation to Siberia, death, or enslavement) including Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, and other Slavic nations considered racially inferior. The Third Reich aimed at repopulating these lands with Germanic colonists in the name of *Lebensraum* during World War II and thereafter.^{[6][7][8]} The entire populations were to be decimated by starvation, allowing for their own agricultural surplus to feed Germany.^[6]

Hitler's strategic program for world domination was based on the belief in the power of *Lebensraum*, pursued by a racially superior society.^[7] People deemed to be part of inferior races, within the territory of *Lebensraum* expansion, were subjected to expulsion or destruction.^[7] The eugenics of *Lebensraum* assumed the right of the German Aryan master race (*Herrenvolk*) to remove indigenous people they considered to be of inferior racial stock (*Untermenschen*) in the name of their own living space.^[7] Nazi Germany also supported other 'Aryan' nations' pursuing their own *Lebensraum*, including Fascist Italy's *Spazio vitale*.^[9]

4.1 Origins



The German geographer and ethnographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904) coined the word *Lebensraum* (1901) as a term of human geography, which the Nazis adopted as a by-word for the aggressive territorial expansion of Germany into the Greater Germanic Reich



The Swedish political scientist Johan Rudolf Kjellén (1864–1922) interpreted Friedrich Ratzel's ethnogeographic term, *Lebensraum* as a geopolitical term, which the Nazis applied to justify German warfare

See also: *Ostsiedlung*

In the 19th century, the term *Lebensraum* was used by the German biologist, Oscar Peschel, in his 1860 review of Darwin's *Origins of Species* (1859).^[10] In 1897, the ethnographer and geographer Friedrich Ratzel in his book *Politische Geographie* applied the word *Lebensraum* ("living space"),^[3] to describe physical geography as a factor that influences human activities in developing into a society.^[11] In 1901, Ratzel extended his thesis in his essay titled "Lebensraum."^[12]

During World War I, the British blockade of trade to Germany caused food shortages in Germany and resources from Germany's African colonies were unable to help; this caused support to rise during the war for a *Lebensraum* that would expand Germany eastward into Russia to gain control of resources to stop the food shortages.^[13] In the period between the First and the Second world wars (1919–39) German nationalists adopted the term *Lebensraum* to their politics for the establishment of a Germanic colonial-empire like the British Empire, the French Empire, and the empire that the U.S. established with the west-ward expansion of the "American frontier", which was advocated and justified by the ideology of Manifest Destiny (1845).^[14] Ratzel said that the development of a people into a society was primarily influenced by their geographic situation (habitat), and that a society who successfully adapted to one geographic territory would naturally and logically expand the boundaries of their nation into another territory.^[12] Yet, to resolve German overpopulation, Ratzel said that Imperial Germany (1871–1918) required overseas colonies to which surplus Germans ought to emigrate.^[15]

Geopolitics

In the event, Friedrich Ratzel's metaphoric concept of society as an organism — which grows and shrinks in logical relation to its *Lebensraum* (habitat) — proved especially influential upon the Swedish political scientist and conservative politician Johan Rudolf Kjellén (1864–1922)

who interpreted that biological metaphor as a geopolitical natural-law.^[16] In the political monograph *Schweden* (1917; *Sweden*), Kjellén coined the terms *geopolitik* (the conditions and problems of a state that arise from its geographic territory), *œcopolitik* (the economic factors that affect the power of the state), and *demopolitik* (the social problems that arise from the racial composition of the state) to explain the political particulars to be considered for the successful administration and governing of a state. Moreover, he had great intellectual influence upon the politics of Imperial Germany, especially with *Staten som livsform* (1916; *The State as a Life-form*) an earlier political-science book read by the society of Imperial Germany, for whom the concept of *geopolitik* acquired an ideological definition unlike the original, human-geography definition.^[17]

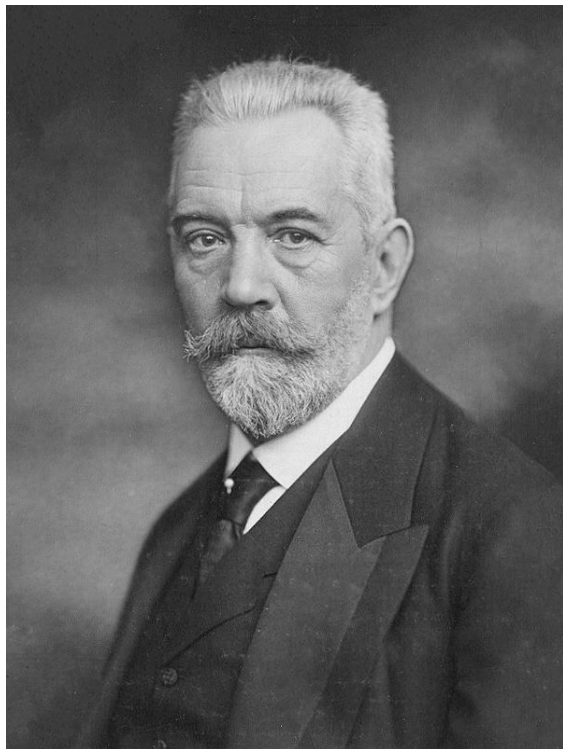
Kjellén's geopolitical interpretation of the *Lebensraum* concept was adopted, expanded, and adapted to the politics of Germany, by the publicists of imperialism, such as the militarist General Friedrich von Bernhardi (1849–1930) and the political geographer and proponent of geopolitics Karl Ernst Haushofer (1869–1946). In *Deutschland und der Nächste Krieg* (1911; *Germany and the Next War*), General von Bernhardi developed Friedrich Ratzel's *Lebensraum* concept as a racial struggle for living space; explicitly identified Eastern Europe as the source of a new, national habitat for the German people; and said that the next war [the Second World War] would be expressly for acquiring *Lebensraum* — all in fulfillment of the "biological necessity" to protect German racial supremacy. That vanquishing the Slavic and the Latin races was necessary, because "without war, inferior or decaying races would easily choke the growth of healthy, budding elements" of the German race — thus, the war for *Lebensraum* was a necessary means of defending Germany against cultural stagnation and the racial degeneracy of miscegenation.^[18]

Racist ideology

In the national politics of Weimar Germany, the geopolitical usage of *Lebensraum* is credited to Karl Ernst Haushofer and his Institute of Geopolitics, in Munich, especially the ultra-nationalist interpretation to avenge military defeat in the First World War (1914–18), and reverse the dictates of the Treaty of Versailles (1919), which reduced Germany geographically, economically, and militarily. The politician Adolf Hitler said that the National Socialist (Nazi) geopolitics of "inevitable expansion" would reverse overpopulation, provide natural resources, and uphold German national honor.^[19] In *Mein Kampf* (1925; *My Struggle*), Hitler presented his conception of *Lebensraum* as the philosophic basis for the Greater Germanic Reich who were destined to colonize Eastern Europe — especially Ukraine in Soviet Russia — and so resolve the problems of overpopulation, and that the European states had to accede to his geopolitical demands.

The Nazi usages of the term *Lebensraum* were explicitly racist, to justify the mystical right of the “racially superior” Germanic peoples (*Herrenvolk*) to fulfil their cultural destiny at the expense of “racially inferior” peoples (*Untermenschen*), such as the Slavs of Poland, Russia, Ukraine, and the other non-Germanic peoples of “the East”.^[4] Based upon Johan Rudolf Kjellén’s geopolitical interpretation of Friedrich Ratzel’s human-geography term, the Nazi régime (1933–45) established *Lebensraum* as the racist rationale of the foreign policy by which they began the Second World War, on 1 September 1939, in effort to realise the Greater Germanic Reich at the expense of the societies of Eastern Europe.^[17]

4.2 First World War nationalist premise



Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, 5th Chancellor of Germany, 1909–17, was a proponent of German *Lebensraum* as a natural right of Imperial Germany

Main article: [Septemberprogramm](#)

In September 1914, when the German victory in the First World War appeared feasible, the government of Imperial Germany introduced the *Septemberprogramm* as an official war aim (*Kriegsziel*), which was secretly endorsed by Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg (1909–17), whereby, upon achieving battlefield victory, Germany would annex territories from western Poland to form the Polish Border Strip (*Polnischer Grenzstreifen*, c.

30,000 km.²). *Lebensraum* would be realised by way of ethnic cleansing, the forcible removal of the native Slavic and Jewish populations, and the subsequent repopulation of the border strip with ethnic-German colonists; likewise, the colonisations of Lithuania and Ukraine; yet military over-extension lost the war for Imperial Germany, and the *Septemberprogramm* went unrealised.^[20]

In April 1915, Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg authorised the Polish Border Strip plans in order to take advantage of the extensive territories in Eastern Europe that Germany had conquered and held since early in the war.^[21] The decisive campaigns of Imperial Germany almost realised *Lebensraum* in the East, especially when Bolshevik Russia unilaterally withdrew as a combatant in the “Great War” among the European imperialist powers — the Triple Entente (the Russian Empire, the French Third Republic, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and the Kingdom of Italy) and the Central Powers (the German Empire, Austria–Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and the Kingdom of Bulgaria).

In March 1918, in effort to reform and modernise the Russian Empire (1721–1917) into a soviet republic, the Bolshevik government agreed to the strategically onerous, territorial cessions stipulated in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918), and Russia yielded to Germany much of the arable land of European Russia, the Baltic governorates, Belarus, Ukraine, and the Caucasus region.^[22] Despite such an extensive geopolitical victory, tactical defeat in the Western Front, strategic over-extension, and factional division in government compelled Imperial Germany to abandon the eastern European *Lebensraum* gained with the Brest-Litovsk Treaty (33 per cent of arable land, 30 per cent of industry, and 90 per cent of the coal mines of Russia) in favour of the peace-terms of the Treaty of Versailles (1919), and yielded those Russian lands to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine.

As a *casus belli* for the conquest and colonisation of Polish territories as living-space and defensive-border for the Imperial German Reich, the *Septemberprogramm* derived from a foreign policy initially proposed by General Erich Ludendorff, in 1914.^[21] Twenty-five years later, Third Reich foreign policy resumed the cultural goal of the pursuit and realisation of German-living-space at the expense of non-German peoples in Eastern Europe with the September Campaign (1 September – 6 October 1939) that began the Second World War in Europe.^[23] In *Germany and the Two World Wars* (1967), the German historian Andreas Hillgruber said that the territorial gains of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918) were the imperial prototype for Adolf Hitler’s Greater German Empire in Eastern Europe:

At the moment of the November 1918 ceasefire in the West, newspaper maps of the military situation showed German troops in Finland, holding a line from the Finnish fjords near Narva, down through Pskov–

Orsha–Mogilev and the area south of Kursk, to the Don east of Rostov. Germany had thus secured Ukraine. The Russian recognition of Ukraine's separation, exacted at Brest–Litovsk, represented the key element in German efforts to keep Russia perpetually subservient. In addition, German troops held the Crimea, and were stationed, in smaller numbers, in Transcaucasia. Even the unoccupied “rump” Russia appeared — with the conclusion of the German–Soviet Supplementary Treaty, on 28 August 1918 — to be in firm, though indirect, dependency on the *Reich*. Thus, Hitler's long-range aim, fixed in the 1920s, of erecting a German Eastern Imperium on the ruins of the Soviet Union was not simply a vision emanating from an abstract wish. In the Eastern sphere, established in 1918, this goal had a concrete point of departure. The German Eastern Imperium had already been — if only for a short time — a reality. — Andreas Hillgruber. *Germany and the Two World Wars* ^[24]

In the event, the *Septemberprogramm* (1914) documents “*Lebensraum* in the East” as philosophically integral to Germanic culture throughout the history of Germany; and that *Lebensraum* is not a racist philosophy particular to the 20th century.^[25] As military strategy, the *Septemberprogramm* came to nought for being infeasible — too few soldiers to realise the plans — during a two-front war; politically, the *Programm* allowed the Imperial Government to learn the opinions of the nationalist, economic, and military élites of the German ruling class who finance and facilitate geopolitics.^[26] Nationally, the annexation and ethnic cleansing of Poland for German *Lebensraum* was an official and a popular subject of “nationalism-as-national-security” endorsed by German society, including the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SDP).^[27] In *The Origins of the Second World War* the British historian A. J. P. Taylor wrote.

It is equally obvious that *Lebensraum* always appeared as one element in these blueprints. This was not an original idea of Hitler's. It was commonplace at the time. *Volk ohne Raum* (*People Without Space*), for instance, by Hans Grimm sold much better than *Mein Kampf* when it was published in 1925. For that matter, plans for acquiring new territory were much aired in Germany during the First World War. It used to be thought that these were the plans of a few crack-pot theorists or of extremist organisations. Now we know better. In 1961, a German professor [Fritz Fischer] reported the results of his investigations into German war aims. These were indeed a “blueprint for aggression”, or, as the professor called them, “a grasp at world

power”: Belgium under German control, the French iron-fields annexed to Germany, and, what is more, Poland and Ukraine to be cleared of their inhabitants and resettled with Germans. These plans were not merely the work of the German General Staff. They were endorsed by the German Foreign Office and by the “Good German”, Bethmann–Hollweg. — Alan J. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* ^[28]

4.3 Interwar propaganda

In the national politics of the Weimar Republic (1919–33), the German Eugenists took up the nationalist, political slogan of *Volk ohne Raum*, and matched it with the racial slogan *Volk ohne Jugend* (a People without Youth), a cultural proposition that ignored the declining German birth-rate (since the 1880s) and contradicted the popular belief that the “German race” was a vigorous and growing people. Despite each slogan (political and racial) being contradicted by the reality of such demographic facts, the nationalists' demands for *Lebensraum* proved to be ideologically valid politics in Weimar Germany.^{[29][30]}

In the lead-up to Anschluss (1938) and the invasion of Poland (1939) the propaganda of Nazi Party in Germany used popular feelings of wounded national identity aroused in the aftermath of the First World War (1914–18) to promote policies of *Lebensraum*. Studies of the homeland focused on the lost colonies after the rebirth of sovereign Poland which was ratified by the Treaty of Versailles (*Volk ohne Raum*), as well as the “eternal Jewish threat” (*Der ewige Jude*, 1937). Emphasis was put on the need for rearmament and the pseudoscience of superior races in the pursuit of “blood and soil”.^[31]

In the twenty-one year inter-war period, between the First (1914–18) and the Second (1939–45) world wars, *Lebensraum* for Germany was the principal tenet of the extremist nationalism that characterised the party politics in Germany. The Nazis, led by Adolf Hitler, demanded not only the geographic reversion of Germany's post-war borders (to recuperate territory lost per the Treaty of Versailles), but demanded the German conquest and colonisation of Eastern Europe (whether or not those lands were German before 1918).^[32] To that end, Hitler said that flouting the Treaty of Versailles was required for Germany to obtain needed *Lebensraum* in Eastern Europe.^[33] During the 1920s, as a member of the Artaman League, an anti-Slav, anti-urban, and anti-Semitic organisation of blood-and-soil ideology, Heinrich Himmler developed *völkisch* ideas that advocated ‘*Lebensraum*,’ for the realisation of which he said that the:

Increase [of] our peasant population is the only effective defense against the influx of the Slav working-class masses from the East.

As six hundred years ago, the German peasant's destiny must be to preserve and increase the German people's patrimony in their holy mother earth battle against the Slav race.^[34]

4.3.1 Ideology of Adolf Hitler



Mein Kampf (1926–28), Hitler's political autobiography presented the racist philosophy of *Lebensraum* advocated for Germany by National Socialists.

In *Mein Kampf* (1925), Hitler dedicated a full chapter titled "Eastern Orientation or Eastern Policy", outlining the need for the new 'living space' for Germany. He claimed that achieving *Lebensraum* required political will, and that the National Socialist Movement ought to strive to expand population area for the German people, and acquire new sources of food as well.^[35] *Lebensraum* became the principal, foreign-policy goal of the Nazi Party and the **Third Reich** (1933–45). Hitler rejected the restoration of the pre-war borders of Germany as an inadequate half-measure towards reducing purported national overpopulation.^[36] From that perspective, he opined that the nature of national borders is always unfinished and momentary, and that their redrawing must continue as Germany's political goal.^[37] Hence, Hitler identified the geopolitics of *Lebensraum* as the ultimate political will of his Party:

And so, we National Socialists consciously draw a line beneath the foreign policy tendency of our pre-War period. We take up where we broke off six hundred years ago. We stop the endless German movement to the south and west, and turn our gaze toward the land in the East. At long last, we break off the colonial and

commercial policy of the pre-War period and shift to the soil policy of the future.^[38]

Mein Kampf sequel, 1928

In the unpublished sequel to *Mein Kampf*, the *Zweites Buch* (1928, Second Book), Hitler further presents the ideology of Nazi *Lebensraum*, in accordance to the then-future foreign policy of the National Socialist Party. To further German population growth, Hitler rejected the ideas of birth control and emigration, arguing that such practices weakened the people and culture of Germany, and that military conquest was the only means for obtaining *Lebensraum*:

The National Socialist Movement, on the contrary, will always let its foreign policy be determined by the necessity to secure the space necessary to the life of our Folk. It knows no Germanising or Teutonising, as in the case of the national bourgeoisie, but only the spread of its own Folk. It will never see in the subjugated, so called Germanised, Czechs or Poles a national, let alone Folkish, strengthening, but only the racial weakening of our Folk.^[39]

Therefore, the non-Germanic peoples of the annexed foreign territories would never be Germanised:

The Folkish State, conversely, must under no conditions annex Poles with the intention of wanting to make Germans out of them some day. On the contrary, it must muster the determination either to seal off these alien racial elements, so that the blood of its own Folk will not be corrupted again, or it must, without further ado, remove them and hand over the vacated territory to its own National Comrades.^[40]

Foreign-policy prime directive

The conquest of living space for Germany was the foremost foreign-policy goal of the Nazis towards establishing the **Greater Germanic Reich** that was to last a thousand years.^[41] On 3 February 1933, at his initial meeting with the generals and admirals of the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler said that the conquest of *Lebensraum* in Eastern Europe, and its "ruthless Germanisation", were the ultimate geopolitical objectives of Reich foreign policy.^[42] That the USSR was the country to provide sufficient *Lebensraum* for the Germans, because it possessed much agricultural land, and was inhabited by Slavic *Untermenschen* (sub-humans) ruled by Jewish Bolshevism.^[43] The racism of Hitler's *Lebensraum* philosophy allowed only the Germanisation of the soil and the land, but not of the native peoples, who were to be destroyed, by slave labour and starvation.^[44]



The Nuremberg Laws (1935) of Nazi Germany employed *scientific racism* to exclude Jews from mainstream society. People with four German grandparents (white circles) were classified as of “German blood,” those with one or two Jewish grandparents (black circles) were considered to be *Mischling*, of “Mixed blood”, while those with three or more Jewish grandparents were deemed to be Jews.

Politics of racism

In the worldview of Adolf Hitler, the idea of restoring the 1914 borders of the German Reich (Imperial Germany, 1871–1918) was absurd, because those national borders did not provide sufficient *Lebensraum* for the German population; that only a foreign policy for the geopolitical conquest of the proper amount of *Lebensraum* would justify the necessary sacrifices entailed by war.^[45] That history was dominated by a merciless struggle for survival among the different races of mankind; and that the races who possessed a great national territory were innately stronger than those races who possessed a small national territory — which the Germanic Aryan race can take by *natural right*.^[46] Such official racist perspectives for the establishment of German *Lebensraum* allowed the Nazis to unilaterally launch a war of aggression (*Blitzkrieg*) against the countries of Eastern Europe, ideologically justified as historical recuperation of the Oium (lands) that the Slavs had conquered from the native *Ostrogoths*.^[47] Although in the 1920s Hitler openly spoke about the need for living space, during his first years in power, he never publicly spoke about it. It was not until 1937 with the German rearmament program well under way that he began to publicly speak about the need for living space again.^[48]

4.4 Second World War (1939–45)

Main articles: Generalplan Ost, Greater Germanic Reich, and Heim ins Reich

On 6 October 1939, Hitler told the Reichstag that after the fall of Poland the most important matter was “a new order of ethnographic relations, that is to say, reset-



Poster (in German and Polish): Obligations of Polish Workers in Germany which included the death penalty for sexual relations with a German.

tlement of nationalities”.^[49] On 20 October 1939, Hitler told General **Wilhelm Keitel** that the war would be a difficult “racial struggle” and that the General Government was to “purify the Reich territory from Jews and Poles, too.”^[50] Likewise, in October 1939, Nazi propaganda instructed Germans to view Poles, Jews, and Gypsies as *Untermenschen* (subhumans).^[51]

In 1941, in a speech to the Eastern Front Battle Group Nord, Himmler said that the war against the Soviet Union was a war of ideologies and races, between **National Socialism** and **Jewish Bolshevism**, between the Germanic peoples (Nordic) and the *Untermenschen* peoples of the East.^[52] Moreover, in one of the secret **Posen speeches** to the *SS-Gruppenführer* at Posen, Himmler said: “the mixed race of the Slavs is based on a sub-race with a few drops of blood of our blood, blood of a leading race; the Slav is unable to control himself and create order.”^[53] In that vein, Himmler published the pamphlet *Der Untermensch* (The Subhuman), which featured photographs of ideal racial types, Aryans, contrasted with the barbarian races, descended from **Attila the Hun** and **Genghis Khan**, to the massacres committed in the Soviet Union dominated by Jewish Bolshevism.^[54]

With the **Polish decrees** (8 March 1940), the Nazis ensured that the racial inferiority of the Poles was legally recognized in the German Reich, and regulated the working and living conditions of Polish laborers (*Zivilarbeiter*).^[55] The Polish Decrees also established that any Pole “who has sexual relations with a German man or woman, or approaches them in any other improper manner, will be punished by death.”^[56] The **Gestapo** were vigilant of sexual relations between Germans and Poles, and pursued anyone suspected of race defilement (*Rassenschande*); likewise, there were proscriptions of sexual relations between Germans and other ethnic groups brought in from Eastern Europe.^[57]

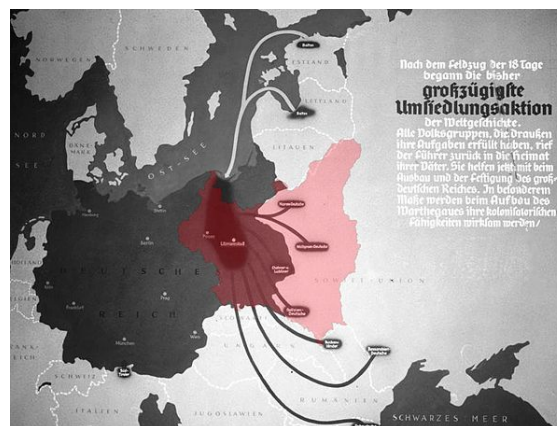
As official policy, *Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler* said that no drop of German blood would be lost or left behind to mingle with any alien races;^[58] and that the Germanisation of Eastern Europe would be complete when “in the

East dwell only men with truly German [and] Germanic blood”.^[59] In the secret memorandum *Reflections on the Treatment of Peoples of Alien Races in the East* (25 May 1940) Himmler outlined the future of the Eastern European peoples; (i) division of native ethnic groups found in the new living-space; (ii) limited, formal education of four years of elementary school (to teach them only how to write their names and to count to five hundred), and (iii) obey the orders of Germans.^[60] Nonetheless, despite the Third Reich’s official racism, the extermination of the native populations of the countries of Eastern Europe was not always necessary, because the **Racial policy of Nazi Germany** regarded some Eastern European peoples as being of Aryan-Nordic stock, especially the local leaders.^[61] On March 4, 1941, Himmler introduced the German People’s List (*Deutsche Volksliste*), the purpose of it being to segregating the inhabitants of German occupied territories into categories of desirability according to criteria.^[62]

Classification under the laws in the annexed territories

Hitler, born in ethnically diverse **Austria-Hungary**, avowed in his *Mein Kampf* (1926), that Germanising Austrian Slavs by language in the **age of Partitions** could not have turned them into fully fledged Germans, because no ‘Negro’ nor a ‘Chinaman’ would ever ‘become German’ just because he has learned to speak German. He believed that no visible differences between peoples could be bridged by the use of a common language. Any such attempts would lead to the ‘bastardization’ of the German element he said.^[63] Likewise, Hitler criticized the previous attempts at Germanisation of the Poles in the **Prussian Partition** as an erroneous idea, based on the same false reasoning. The Polish people could not possibly be Germanised by being compelled to speak German because they belonged to a different race, he said. “The result would have been fatal” for the purity of the German nation because the foreigners would ‘compromise’ by their inferiority “the dignity and nobility” of the German nation.^[63] During the war, Hitler remarked in his “**Table Talk**” recorded at the **headquarters** that people should only be Germanized if they were to improve the German blood line:

There is one cardinal principle. This question of the Germanisation of certain peoples must not be examined in the light of abstract ideas and theory. We must examine each particular case. The only problem is to make sure whether the offspring of any race will mingle well with the German population and will improve it, or whether, on the contrary (as is the case when Jew blood is mixed with German blood), negative results will arise. Unless one is completely convinced that the foreigners whom one proposes to introduce into the



The Third Reich in 1940 (dark grey) after the conquest of Poland together with the USSR, showing pockets of German colonists resettled into the annexed territories of Poland from the Soviet “sphere of influence” during the “Heim ins Reich” action. – The Nazi propaganda poster, superimposed with the red outline of Poland missing entirely from the original German print.^[64]

German community will have a beneficial effect, well, I think it’s better to abstain, however strong the sentimental reasons may be which urge such a course on us. There are plenty of Jews with blue eyes and blond hair, and not a few of them have the appearance which strikingly supports the idea of the Germanisation of their kind. It has, however, been indisputably established that, in the case of Jews, if the physical characteristics of the race are sometimes absent for a generation or two, they will inevitably reappear in the next generation. — “**Table Talk**”^[65]

Informed by the **blood and soil** (*Blut und Boden*) beliefs of ethnic identity — a philosophic basis of *Lebensraum* — Nazi policy required destroying the USSR for the lands of Russia to become the granary of Germany. The **Germanisation** of Russia required the destruction of the cities, in effort to vanquish **Russianness, Communism, and Jewish Bolshevism**.^[66] To that effect, Hitler ordered the **Siege of Leningrad** (September 1941–January 1944), to raze the city and destroy the native Russian population.^[67] Geopolitically, the establishment of German *Lebensraum* in the east of Europe would thwart **blockades**, like those occurred in the First World War, which starved the people of Germany.^[68] Moreover, using Eastern Europe to feed Germany also was intended to exterminate millions of Slavs, by slave labour and starvation.^[69] When deprived of producers, a workforce, and customers, native industry would cease and disappear from the Germanised region, which then became agricultural land for settlers from Nazi Germany.^[69]

The Germanised lands of Eastern Europe would be settled by the *Wehrbauer*, a soldier–peasant who was to maintain a fortified line of defence, which would prevent

any non-German civilisation from arising to threaten the **Greater Germanic Reich**.^[70] Plans for the Germanisation of western Europe were less severe, as the Nazis needed the **collaboration** of the local political and business establishments, especially that of local industry and their skilled workers. Moreover, Nazi racial policies considered the populations of western Europe more racially acceptable to Aryan standards of “racial purity”. In practice, the number and assortment of **Nazi racial categories** indicated that “East is bad and West is acceptable”; thus, a person’s “race” was a matter of life or death in a country under **Nazi occupation**.^[71]

The racist ideology of *Lebensraum* also comprised the **North German** racial stock of the northern-European peoples of **Scandinavia** (Denmark, Norway, Sweden); and the continental-European peoples of Alsace and Lorraine, Belgium and northern France; whilst Great Britain would either be annexed or be made a **puppet state**.^[72] Moreover, the poor military performance of the Italian armed forces forced **Fascist Italy**’s withdrawal from the war in 1943, which then made northern Italy a territory to be **annexed** to the Greater Germanic Reich.^[72]

Collaborationism



To achieve *Lebensraum* in Eastern Europe, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler and Gen. Andrey Vlasov, of the Russian Liberation Army, joined forces to rid Russia of Communism and supposed Jewish Bolshevism.

For political expediency, the Nazis continually modified their racist politics towards non-Germanic peoples,

and so continually redefined the ideological meaning of *Lebensraum*, in order to collaborate with other peoples, in service to Reich foreign policy. Early in his career as leader of the Nazis, Adolf Hitler said he would accept friendly relations with the USSR, on condition that the Soviet government re-establish the disadvantageous borders of European Russia, which were demarcated in the **Treaty of Brest-Litovsk** (1918), which made possible the restoration of Russo-German diplomatic relations.^[73]

In the 1921–22 period, Hitler said that German *Lebensraum* might be achieved with a smaller USSR, created by sponsoring anti-communist Russians in deposing the Communist government of the **Bolsheviks**; however, by the end of 1922, Hitler changed his opinion when there arose the possibility of an Anglo-German geopolitical alliance to destroy the USSR.^[73] Yet, once **Operation Barbarossa** (1941) launched the invasion of the USSR, the strategic stance of the Nazi régime towards a smaller, independent Russia was affected by political pressure from the **German Army**, who asked Hitler, the supreme military commander, to endorse the creation and integration, to Wehrmacht operations in Russia, of the anti-Communist **Russian Liberation Army** (ROA); an organisation of **defectors**, led by General **Andrey Vlasov**, who meant to depose the régime of **Josef Stalin** and the **Russian Communist Party**.^[74]

Initially, Hitler rejected the idea of collaborating with the peoples in the East.^[75] However, Nazis such as Joseph Goebbels and Alfred Rosenberg were in favour of collaboration against Bolshevism and offering some independence to the peoples of the East.^{[76][77]} In 1940, Himmler opened up membership for people he regarded as being of “related stock”, which resulted in a number of right wing Scandinavians signing up to fight in the Waffen-SS. When the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, further volunteers from France, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, and the Croatia signed up to fight for the Nazi cause.^[78] After 1942, when the war turned decisively against Nazi Germany, further recruits from the occupied territories signed up to fight for the Nazis.^[78] Hitler was worried about the foreign legions on the Eastern Front; he remarked that “One mustn’t forget that, unless he is convinced of his racial membership of the Germanic Reich, the foreign legionary is bound to feel that he’s betraying his country.”^[79]

After further losses of manpower, the Nazis tried to persuade the **forced foreign laborers in the Reich** to fight against Bolshevism, **Martin Bormann** issued a memorandum on 5 May 1943:

It impossible to win someone over to a new idea while insulting his inner sense of worth at the same time. One cannot expect the highest level of performance from people who are called beasts, barbarians, and subhuman. Instead, positive qualities such as the will to fight Bolshevism, the desire to safeguard one’s own

existence and that of one's country, commitment and willingness to work are to be encouraged and promoted. Moreover, everything must be done to encourage the necessary co-operation of the European peoples in the fight against Bolshevism.^[80]

In 1944, as the German army continually lost battles and territory to the **Red Army**, the leaders of the Third Reich, especially *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler, recognised the political, ideological, and military value of the collaborationist Russian Liberation Army in fighting **Jewish Bolshevism**.^[81] Secretly, Himmler in his Posen speeches remarked: "I wouldn't have had any objections, if we had hired Mr. Vlasov and every other Slavic subject wearing a Russian general's uniform, to make propaganda against the Russians. I wouldn't have any objections at all. Wonderful."^[53]

Implementation

Further information: **Generalplan Ost**, **Expulsion of Poles by Nazi Germany (1939–1944)**, **Ural Mountains in Nazi planning**, and **Wehrbauer**

The **Polish Campaign** (1 September 1939) was Adolf



The Nazi establishment of German Lebensraum required the expulsion of the Poles from Poland, such as their expulsion from the Reichsgau Wartheland in 1939.

Hitler's first attempt to achieve *Lebensraum* for the Germans. The Nazi invasion of Eastern Europe consisted of atrocities committed against Polish men, women, and children. Popular German acceptance of the atrocities was achieved by way of **Nazi propaganda** (print, radio, cinema), a key factor behind the manufactured consent that justified German brutality towards civilians; by continually manipulating the national psychology, the Nazis convinced the German people to believe that Jews and Slavs were *Untermenschen* (subhumans).^[82]

In autumn 1939, Nazi Germany's implementation of *Lebensraum* policy began with the **Occupation of Poland (1939–1945)**; in October 1939, Heinrich Himmler became the **Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation**



Germanisation of Poland: SS Obergruppenführer Arthur Greiser welcomes the millionth Eastern European Volksdeutscher to be resettled in annexed Polish territories, March 1944.

of **German Nationhood** tasked with returning all ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*) to the Reich; preventing harmful foreign influences upon the German people; and to create new settlement areas (especially for returning *Volksdeutsche*).^[83] From mid-1940, the ethnic cleansing (forcible removal) of Poles from the **Reichsgau Wartheland** initially occurred across the border, to the **General Government** (a colonial political entity ostensibly autonomous of the Reich), then, after the invasion of the USSR, the displaced Polish populations were jailed in *Polenlager* (Pole-storage camps) in Silesia and sent to villages designated as **ghettos**. In four years of Germanisation (1940–44), the Nazis forcibly removed some 50,000 ethnic Poles from the Polish territories annexed to the Greater German Reich, notably some 18,000–20,000 ethnic Poles from Żywiec County, in Polish Silesia, effected in **Action Saybusch**.^{[84][85]}

The German population's psychological acceptance of extermination-for-*Lebensraum* was achieved with propaganda; the leaders of the **Hitler Youth** were issued pamphlets (e.g. *On the German People and its Territory*) meant to influence the rank-and-file Hitler Youth about the necessity of Nazi racist practices in obtaining *Lebensraum* for the German people.^[86] Likewise, in the Reich proper, schoolchildren were given propaganda pamphlets (e.g. *You and Your People*) explaining the importance of *Lebensraum* for the future of Germany and the German people.^[87]

The East–West frontier

Concerning the geographic extent of the Greater Germanic Reich, Adolf Hitler rejected the Ural Mountains as an adequate, eastern border for Germany, that such mid-sized mountains would not make do as the boundary between the "European and Asiatic worlds"; that only a living wall of racially pure Aryans would make do as a border; and that permanent war in the East would "preserve the vitality of the race":

The real frontier is the one that separates the Germanic world from the Slav world. It is our duty to place it where we want it to be. If anyone asks where we obtain the right to extend the Germanic space to the east, we reply that, for a nation, its awareness of what it represents carries this right with it. It is success that justifies everything. The reply to such questions can only be of an empirical nature. It is inconceivable that a higher people should painfully exist on a soil too narrow for it, while amorphous masses, which contribute nothing to civilization, occupy infinite tracts of a soil that is one of the richest in the world ...

We must create conditions for our people that favour its multiplication, and we must, at the same time, build a dike against the Russian flood ... Since there is no natural protection against such a flood, we must meet it with a living wall. A permanent war on the eastern front will help form a sound race of men, and will prevent us from relapsing into the softness of a Europe thrown back upon itself. It should be possible for us to control this region to the east with two hundred and fifty thousand men, plus a cadre of good administrators ...

This space in Russia must always be dominated by Germans.^[88]

In 1941, the Reich decided that within two decades, by the year 1961, Poland would have been emptied of Poles and re-populated with ethnic-German colonists from Bukovina, Eastern Galicia, and Volhynia.^[89] The ruthless Germanisation Hitler required for *Lebensraum* was attested in the reports of *Wehrbauer* (soldier-peasant) colonists' assigned to ethnically cleansed Poland – of finding half-eaten meals at table and unmade beds in the houses given them by the Nazis.^[90] Baltic Germans from Estonia and Latvia were evaluated for racial purity; those classified to the highest category, *Ost-Falle*, were resettled in the Eastern Wall.^[91]

Moreover, the Germanisation of Russia began with Operation Barbarossa (June–September 1941) meant to conquer and colonise European Russia as the granary of Germany.^[94] For those Slavic lands, the Nazi theorist and ideologue Alfred Rosenberg proposed administrative organisation by the *Reichskommissariate*, countries consolidated into colonial realms ruled by a commissar:

In 1943, in the secret Posen speeches, Heinrich Himmler spoke of the Ural Mountains as the eastern border of the Greater Germanic Reich.^[53] That the Germanic race would gradually expand to that eastern border, so that, in several generations' time, the German *Herrenvolk*, as the leading people of Europe, would be ready to “resume the battles of destiny against Asia”, which were “sure to break out again”; and that the defeat of Europe would mean “the destruction of the creative power of the Earth”,^[53]

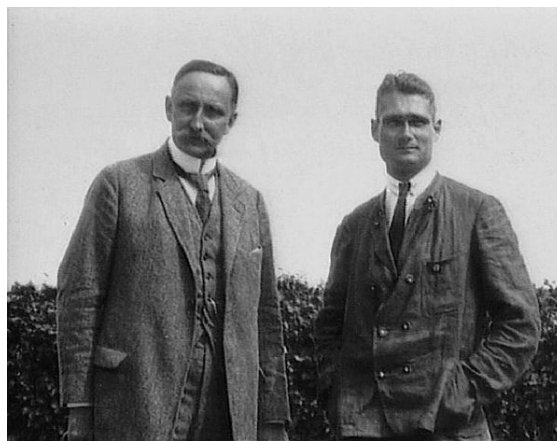
nonetheless, the Ural Mountains were a secondary objective of the secret *Generalplan Ost* (Master Plan East) for the colonisation of Eastern Europe.^[95]

The early stages of *Lebensraum im Osten* (Lebensraum in the East) featured the ethnic-cleansing of Russians and other Slavs (Galicians, Karelians, Ukrainians, *et al.*) from their lands, and the consolidation of their countries into the *Reichskommissariat* administration that extended to the Ural Mountains, the geographic frontier of Europe and Asia. To manage the ethnic, racial, and political populations of the USSR, the German Army promptly organized collaborationist, anti-Communist, puppet governments in the *Reichskommissariat Ostland* (1941–45) and the *Reichskommissariat Ukraine* (1941–44). Nonetheless, despite the initial, strategic successes of Operation Barbarossa, in counterattack, the Red Army's defeats of the German Army at the Battle of Stalingrad (August 1942–February 1943) and at the Battle of Kursk (July–August 1943) in Russia, added to the Allied Operation Husky (July–August 1943) in Sicily, thwarted the full implementation of Nazi *Lebensraum* in the east of Europe.

4.5 Historical retrospective

Further information: Nazi foreign policy debate

The scale of *Lebensraum*



The geopolitician Karl Haushofer (left) provided the Nazis with the rationalisations (intellectual, academic, scientific) for *Lebensraum*, transmitted to Chancellor Adolf Hitler, by way of Rudolf Hess (right), who was Haushofer's student.

The scope of the enterprise and the scale of the territories invaded and conquered for Germanisation by the Third Reich, indicated two ideological purposes for *Lebensraum*, and their relation to the geopolitical purposes of the Nazis: (i) a program of global conquest, begun in Central Europe; and (ii) a program of continental European conquest, limited to Eastern Europe. From the strategic perspectives of the *Stufenplan* (“Plan

in Stages”), the global- and continental- interpretations of Nazi *Lebensraum* are feasible, and neither exclusive of each other, nor counter to Hitler’s foreign-policy goals for the Third Reich.^[96]

Among themselves, within the Reich régime proper, the Nazis held different definitions of *Lebensraum*, such as the idyllic, agrarian society that required much arable land, advocated by the blood-and-soil ideologist **Richard Walther Darré** and *Reichsführer-SS* **Heinrich Himmler**; and the urban, industrial state, that required raw materials and slaves, advocated by Adolf Hitler.^[97] In the event, *Operation Barbarossa*, the invasion of Russia, in summer 1941, required a compromise of concept, purpose and execution to realize Hitler’s conception of *Lebensraum* in the Slavic lands of Eastern Europe.^[96]

During the Posen speeches, Himmler spoke about the deaths of millions of Soviet prisoners of war and **foreign labourers**:

One basic principle must be the absolute rule for the SS men: We must be honest, decent, loyal and comradely to members of our own blood and to nobody else. What happens to a Russian, to a Czech, does not interest me in the slightest. What other nations can offer in the way of good blood of our type, we will take, if necessary, by **kidnapping their children and raising them here with us**. Whether nations live in prosperity or starve to death interests me only so far as we need them as slaves for our culture; otherwise, it is of no interest to me. Whether 10,000 Russian females fall down from exhaustion while digging an anti-tank ditch interests me only insofar as the anti-tank ditch for Germany is finished.^[53]

The ideology of *Lebensraum*

Racism usually is not a concept integral to the ideology of territorial expansionism; nor to the original meaning of the term *Lebensraum* (“biological habitat”), as defined by the ethnographer and geographer **Friedrich Ratzel**. Nonetheless, National Socialism (Nazism), the ideology of the **Third Reich** established racism —specifically **anti-Semitism** — as a philosophic basis of *Lebensraum*-as-geopolitics; which Adolf Hitler presented as Nazi racist ideology in his political autobiography *Mein Kampf* (1926–28).

Moreover, the geopolitical interpretations of national living-space of the academic **Karl Haushofer** (a teacher of **Rudolf Hess**, Hitler’s deputy), provided Adolf Hitler with the intellectual, academic, and scientific rationalisations that justified the territorial expansion of Germany, by the **natural right** of the German Aryan race, to expand into, occupy, and **exploit** the lands of other countries, regardless of the native populations.^[98] In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler explained the living-space “required” by Nazi Germany:

In an era when the Earth is gradually being divided up among states, some of which embrace almost entire continents, we cannot speak of a world power in connection with a formation whose political mother country is limited to the absurd area of five hundred thousand square kilometres.^[99] Without consideration of traditions and prejudices, Germany must find the courage to gather our people, and their strength, for an advance along the road that will lead this people from its present, restricted living space to new land and soil, and, hence, also free it from the danger of vanishing from the earth, or of serving others as a slave nation.^[100] For it is not in colonial acquisitions that we must see the solution of this problem, but exclusively in the acquisition of a territory for settlement, which will enhance the area of the mother country, and hence not only keep the new settlers in the most intimate community with the land of their origin, but secure for the entire area those advantages which lie in its unified magnitude.^[101]

4.6 Contemporary definitions

Since the end of the **Second World War** (1939–45), the term “*Lebensraum*” has applied to the nationalist expansionism (territorial, economic, cultural) of countries throughout the world.

China

The Tibetan intellectual **Tsering Shakya** said that the policies of the **People’s Republic of China** that rationalise and justify the incorporation of Tibet into the **People’s Republic of China** are a form of Chinese Communist *Lebensraum*.^{[102][103]}

Egypt

In 1954, the Arab nationalism of **Gamal Abdel Nasser** was derived from the domestic circumstances of post-monarchical Egypt, which necessitated seeking *Lebensraum* beyond the political and cultural borders of Egyptian borders. The intellectual bases of radical, Arabist nationalism in Egypt were attributed to the ideological influences of *Lebensraum* by **Nazi Germany** (1933–45) and **Fascist Italy** (1922–43), which negatively affected relations (political, cultural, social) between Egypt and the Sudan.^{[104][105]}

Israel

The term *Lebensraum* is applied to Israel’s territorial actions in the **1948 Arab-Israeli war**^{[106][107]} and in the

policies for Israeli settlement of the Palestinian territories.^{[108][109][110][111]} Efraim Eitam, an Israeli government minister under Prime minister Ariel Sharon, supposedly used the term *Lebensraum* as the conceptual basis for his statements that all Arab citizens of Israel (Israeli Arabs) and all Palestinians should either be persuaded or forced to leave Israel and the Palestinian Territories.^[112]

The U.S.

The world-wide establishment of capitalism, by means of economic globalization by the U.S. has been called the “American Lebensraum”, which is criticized as a neocolonialism and as cultural imperialism.^{[113][114]} American expert on geopolitics, Isaiah Bowman, known as “Roosevelt’s Geographer,” had promised in 1944 in front of his Council of Foreign Relations colleagues: If Hitler wished lebensraum, he will get lebensraum, a global American one, albeit it will be economic lebensraum.^[115]

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4.10 External links

- The Invasion of the Soviet Union and the Beginnings of Mass Murder, in the Yad Vashem website
- Utopia: The Greater Germanic Reich of the German Nation — A map of Nazi plans for German empire
- Hitler and 'Lebensraum' in the East, by Jeremy Noakes

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